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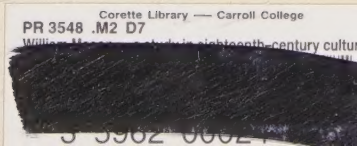
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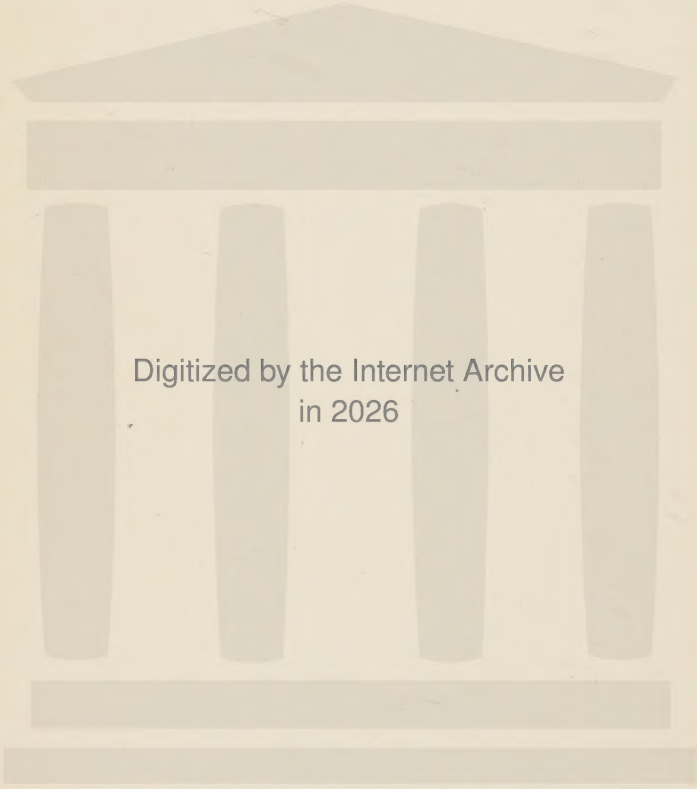
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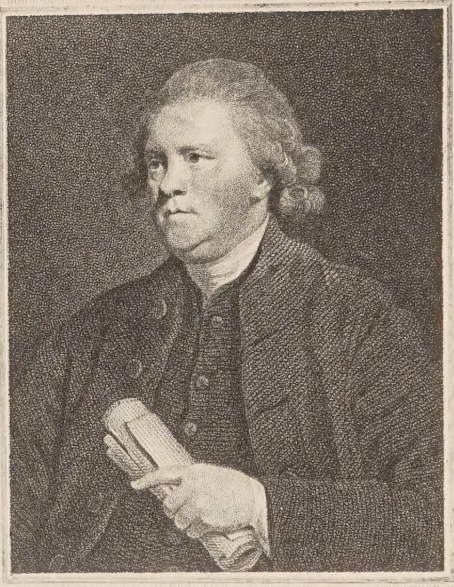

THE REV. WILLIAM MASON, A.M.

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WILLIAM MASON

A STUDY IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY CULTURE

By

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TO

ARTHUR HUNTINGTON NASON

PREFACE

NOTHING is more worthy of study or receives a more tardy attention than the commonplace. Until recent years, scholarship has been inclined to ignore all but the outstanding figures of the eighteenth century, and to pass over the rest as Neo-classical and dull, two epithets that were taken as approximate synonyms. During the 1890's, however, the discovery of Romantic verse-forms, of Romantic local-color, and of a Romantic point of view, in such poets as Thomson, Akenside, and the Wartons, revealed their significance as precursors of nineteenth century Romanticism. Of recent years, therefore, an ever-increasing group of scholars has been tracing the philosophical, the social, and the cultural background of the eighteenth century, so that to-day Neo-classicism itself is by no means regarded as dull, and the entire century stands revealed as an age of intense, though hardly conscious, struggle between Neo-classicism, poised and balanced but static and cold, and Romanticism, uncouth and immature but at least progressive and dynamic. This struggle constitutes one of the most significant chapters in the history of Anglo-Saxon culture; and its outcome is the civilization of the nineteenth century and of our own generation. Society is still experimenting with the general principles then laid down: a free literature, unhampered by traditional rules, a free commerce, unhampered by governmental monopoly, a body politic composed of men and women free and equal before the law.

Viewed from this angle, the comparative importance of eighteenth-century figures appears in a new ratio: the thinker, whatever his purely literary significance, receives a higher estimation—above all the philosopher, who, like Shaftesbury or Priestley or even Bolingbroke, was struggling with the age-old problem of human evolution, linking the present which is, to the future which men hope to achieve. But the Anglo-Saxons are a practical rather than a logical people; and these thinkers, especially the more abstract, influenced, but did not always dominate, contemporary culture. The average intelligent person of the day did not, then any more

than now, work out or accept some philosophic system and allow it strictly to govern his life; for innumerable subtle facts in his inner subconsciousness and in his environment ordered his actions and the thoughts by which he chose to justify them. If then we are to know his thought and understand his action, we must study the individual himself, in the light of the traditions, Neo-classical and otherwise, that he inherited, and in the light of the new ideas that his own generation sought to bring to a consummation. The purely literary man, as well as the philosopher, reflects the cultural conflict of a changing age in the very forms of his verse, in his diction and sentence-structure; and furthermore, we can study it in his biography, in his own doings, and in his reaction to events and to the doings of others. If we would know an age, we must study the commonplace even more than the exceptional: William Mason, as a thinker, as a dilettante in many arts, and as a man living among men, fairly represents the commonplace of his period and social class; and the present study of his accomplishments, literary, artistic, clerical, political, and personal, is intended as a limited contribution toward a future evaluation of the rank and file of eighteenth-century life and thought. It also happens that Mason was acquainted with almost everyone of distinction in his generation. With Gray, Walpole, and Reynolds, he was intimate; and he knew Johnson, Boswell, Warton, a host of eminent divines, and a whole galaxy of stars and garters. On all of these figures, his biography throws an interesting and sometimes illuminating side-light; but the present study aims in chief to show the man as he was, in relation to his generation and judged by their standards as well as our own.

The biography of an average person of any age is especially likely, for its very commonplaceness, to fail of any adequate record. In the case of Mason, however, we are fortunate in having a great mass of authentic information, not only in his own literary performances and letters but also in contemporary periodicals, diaries, and correspondence. Indeed, more, and more intimate, detail is available concerning him than concerning any other literary man of his generation except Dr. Johnson, Horace Walpole, and perhaps Gray and Cowper. This mass of material, scattered through hundreds of volumes, many of them rare and most of them obscure

to the general reader at least, has been collected; its authenticity weighed; the fragments, often drawn from widely diverse origins, have been articulated part to part; and the results, freely interwoven with the *ipsissima verba* of the original, have been set forth in the text of the present study. The foot-notes are generally intended for the eighteenth-century specialist, who is interested in the sources and related problems.

The present study was begun ten years ago at the instance of Professor A. H. Nason; and a *Life of William Mason*, by the present author, was accepted for the degree of M.A. by New York University in 1915. To Professor Nason, I owe the inspiration and the foundations in scholarly method that laid the basis for the present volume. After 1915, the work was carried on for a time in a desultory fashion, and then was completely revised and the critical part added under the immediate supervision of Professor G. L. Kittredge, to whom I owe many suggestions, and for whose kindness and painstaking assistance it is difficult to express adequate thanks. In 1920, *The Life and Works of William Mason* was accepted by Harvard University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the doctor's degree. Since then the chapters have undergone further addition and revision for both style and content. My especial thanks are due Professor W. P. Trent of Columbia University for the reading and detailed criticism of the entire manuscript a few months before its going to press.

For critical assistance on certain sections, my thanks are owing to Professor Carleton Brown of Bryn Mawr College, and to Professors F. N. Robinson, C. H. McIlwain, C. B. Gulick and Dean J. L. Lowes, of Harvard University. To my uncle, the late Rev. Mytton Maury, to Dean A. L. Bouton, Professor G. L. van Roosbroeck, and Professor T. W. Edmondson, of New York University, to Professor R. D. Havens of the University of Rochester, to Professor R. S. Crane of Northwestern University, to Professor R. C. Whitford of Knox College, and to my former fellow-students, Dr. A. E. Longueil and Dr. A. D. McKillop, I acknowledge obligations for references and suggestions. To my wife for many hours spent in the ungrateful task of verifying some thousands of quotations and references, thanks are especially due. To the Rev. G. L. Buchanan, Vicar of Holy Trinity, Hull, England,

and to R. F. Scott, Esq., Master of St. John's College, Cambridge, I owe the thanks that Americans must so commonly give to Englishmen, who, being near the source of documents and official records, extend a helping hand to those who are less fortunately situated. I owe thanks also to the custodians of the New York and the Boston Public Libraries, of the Boston Athenæum, and of Harvard University Library, especially Mrs. F. V. Livingston and W. B. Briggs, Esq. Finally, to my present colleagues C. A. Mendum, Esq., and Professor H. F. Watson for assistance in proof-correction, and to the Director of New York University Press and to Miss H. E. Steen, Secretary to the Director, for both editing and proof-reading, I express grateful thanks.

J. W. D.

Orono, Maine,
May 19, 1924.

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WILLIAM MASON

CHAPTER I

THE VOGUE OF MASON

TO the reading public of to-day, the name of William Mason signifies nothing; and, even to the generality of scholars, he is known only as the friend and biographer of Thomas Gray and as the author of a sentimental poem on gardening and of two tragedies "written on the model of the antient Greek." Mason would serve as an excellent *exemplum* in a homily on the vanity of human authorship. There is hardly a writer of his period who is so little known in our day and whose poems ran through so many editions in his own. The reviews praised his works; Gray spoke highly of them; Walpole was all adulation; Mrs. Siddons acted in one of his plays; Reynolds annotated one of his poems; Johnson admitted the power of his satire; and Warton went out of his way to bestow supreme commendation upon his didactic poetry. Works by Mason were done into German, French, and Italian; and more than a score of early biographies testify to the interest in his life and personality. But the glory has indeed departed. The most eminent scholars of the last thirty years can hardly speak of him without a sneer, and some have carried their derogatory criticism almost to the point of personal vituperation. Horace long ago said the last word *de gustibus;* but, whether or not one likes Mason's critical opinions and his creative efforts, one cannot blink the fact that the later eighteenth century did like them, and that he stands as an exemplar of his age, especially in those matters which appealed uniquely to its special taste. This very fact that his writings have in them little of the universal and yet much that pleased his contemporaries, creates his historical significance.

Mason is a good summary of his age, moreover, not only because he isolates its essential characteristics, but also because his activities were so diverse as to include most of the things that interested the cultivated gentleman of the period. Mason wrote poetry, lyric, didactic, dramatic, and, to a lesser degree, narrative. He was a com-

prehensive, if superficial, musician: he composed, performed, theorized, and invented a new instrument. He drew and painted, and criticized the pictorial arts. He was deeply interested in architecture, both Classical and Gothic. He was esteemed an authority on gardening, and was much in demand for the practical exercise of his "*métier jardinique.*" But the fine arts form only one current of his busy life: he was a typical divine of the Establishment, a pluralist of many interests and diverse functions. Politics also engaged his active attention. His writings, indeed, embraced subjects from the York Lunatic Asylum and the West Indian Slave Trade to Runic poetry and the history of organ-building. Not only were Mason's interests widely scattered; but most of them were active, at least to some degree, during the entire half-century of his maturity from 1747 to 1797. If one sneers at Mason, one must sneer at the age; and such a condemnation brings its own Nemesis.

The biographies of Mason are numerous, but we have no reason to suppose that he or any of his friends or relatives contributed anything, even to the two or three that date from his own lifetime. Most of them were written in the early nineteenth century, while *The Harcourt Papers* were still in manuscript, and before the Gray or the Walpole letters had been published in anything like complete form. Lacking these important sources, the biographies are necessarily fragmentary; and what definite matter they do contain, cannot be relied upon. Even flagrant errors passed from hand to hand without question; and, by tracing these slips, one can often tell the actual source of a biography, although the author protests that he writes from personal knowledge or that he has searched original sources for all the facts obtainable. The more recent biographies of Mason are much more inclined to go back to bona fide sources; but they are very brief; and the most important one, Sir Leslie Stephen's article in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, is not to be depended upon even in important matters of date and bibliography.

The first life of Mason consists of two columns in *The Biographia Dramatica, a Companion to the Theatre.*[1] Mason's own comment upon it in a letter to Walpole is significant: "I am told

[1] Baker, *Biog. Dram.*, Dublin, 1782, *sub* Mason.

that I have had the honor to have my Life printed, not indeed by Dr. Johnson, but I fancy by a biographer of the same stamp; for he says I am a republican. If you have the curiosity to read it, I am told it is a book called *A Companion to the Theatre*." [2] To this letter, Walpole made reply: "I will read the imaginary life of Mason though I seldom do read the romances of the day." [3]

In 1792, the *Gentleman's* [4] printed a sketch in one paragraph, with few facts and no dates, certainly without Mason's authority.[5] At the time of the poet's death in 1797, moreover, there appeared an extended obituary notice.[6] The five dates that it gives are all at least approximately correct[7]; and, although Mason's Greek and Latin scholarship is rather generously estimated, the eulogy is in general judiciously phrased. His father is rather inexactly described as "a clergyman, who had the living of Hull": Hull, as a matter of fact, had at least two livings, St. Mary's and Holy Trinity, of which the latter was the elder Mason's benefice. Bell's *British Theatre*, which brought out a life of Mason in the same year, committed the same inaccuracy in almost the same words.[8] As regards Mason's birth, Bell apparently follows the worthless *Biographia Dramatica*, and gives the date as "about the year 1726." He sketches the rest of the life rather hazily, and adds some laudatory criticisms of *Elfrida* and *Caractacus*. If Mason, or any one who had access to his private papers, had written the life, one might have expected some use of the poet's manuscript *Chronology*[9]; but no trace of it appears.

In 1807, Dr. John Aikin contributed an article on Mason to the *General Biography*.[10] This life contains most of the salient facts, and gives correctly the dates of Mason's birth, of his fellowship and degrees, and of his chief publications — matters which Aikin seems to have gathered mainly from notices in the reviews.

[2] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., 1851, II, 294.

[3] *Ibid.*, II, 296.

[4] *Gentleman's Mag.*, LXII, 504.

[5] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, July, 1792.

[6] *Gent. Mag.*, LXVII, 359.

[7] B.A., 1745: more accurately 1745/6. Wife died March 24, 1767: more probably March 27. See Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 136-137; Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., II, 412.

[8] Bell, *British Theatre*, XXXI. A four-page life of Mason is prefixed to *Caractacus*.

[9] See Appendix A. Several errors in the chronology make it easy to trace its influence.

[10] The authors of the whole work were J. Aikin, T. Morgan, and W. Johnson. The Mason life, signed "A.," is apparently by Aikin. See VI, 623.

In detail, however, the work is not to be trusted: it states that Mason's *Installation Ode*, performed and published in the summer of 1749, was "the first public specimen he gave of his poetical talents"; it expressly puts *Musæus* (1747) later; and it ignores *Il Pacifico* (1748). It remained, however, an influential contribution to Mason scholarship for half a century, and was reprinted as late as 1852.[11]

In 1808,[12] Brydges published an article on Mason by "J.H.M." in the *Censura Literaria*.[13] Although "J.H.M." follows rather closely the order of events as given in Aikin, and even copies the error of declaring Mason's first work the *Installation Ode*, he appears also to have consulted a few primary sources such as Gisborne and Mathias.[14] Brydges printed the life in "much less perfect form, than the writer could have wished"; and, in a note to the second edition, he refers the reader to the "more detailed memoir" of the "candid and accurate" (*sic!*) Chalmers.[15]

In the same year, *The Cabinet of Poetry* [16] printed a brief and very sketchy life of Mason.[17] The encyclopædias of the day were generally true to type: they copied one another's errors, and added little except further errors. The early *Britannicas* ignored Mason[18]; but the edition of 1810 gave him somewhat over a column. The life follows either Bell's *British Theatre* or the *Gentleman's Magazine* of 1797, in saying that Mason's father held "the living of Hull," and follows Aikin in making the *Installation Ode* seem Mason's first work.[19] The work of Rees

[11] *Sub* Aikin, Bibl. B.

[12] I have not had access to this volume of the *ed. princ.* of the *Cen. Lit.* The *Brit. Mus. Cat.* dates the set 1805-9; but as vols. VI and VIII were both published in 1808, vol. VII, in which the *Mason* seems to have appeared, probably also came out in that year.

[13] Brydges, *Cen. Lit.*, VII, 356, ed. 1815. Is J.H.M. John Mitford, 1781-1859?

[14] See foot-note reference on page 360; and references to Gisborne and to Mathias' *Pursuits of Literature*, on page 365.

[15] Brydges, *Cen. Lit.*, ed. 1815, X, 399.

[16] *Cabinet of Poetry*, VI, 411-412.

[17] Of the five dates which it supplies, one is wrong: *Isis* was not (if we may trust its title-page) published in 1748; it was written then and published a year later (*Works*, I, 179, and Bibl. A). The facts that *The Cabinet* gives correctly, could easily have been compiled from the lives already published and from the notes in Mason's *Poems* of 1797.

[18] He does not appear in the editions of Edinburgh, 1778, or of Philadelphia, 1798.

[19] To these borrowed inaccuracies, it adds at least one of its own: *Palinody to Liberty*, in place of *Palinodia*. See *Works*, I, 78. This form of the word is rare in the eighteenth century. See *N.E.D.*

is no better. He published a folio page on Mason,[20] and tried to convey the impression of having known him[21]; but the life does not contribute any new facts.[22]

In 1810, the "candid and accurate" Chalmers brought out *The Works of the English Poets*, containing his life of Mason.[23] He had evidently made some attempt to get at the sources; and he gives a considerable amount of new material. The work, however, has the sign-manual of inaccuracy on the very first page: Mason's birth is dated in New Style, and his graduation from college, in Old, both without notice; and his father appears as "the vicar of St. Trinity Hall" instead of St. Trinity, Hull. The reprint of Chalmers' biography in the *General Biographical Dictionary*[24] leaves "St. Trinity Hall" uncorrected; and a catchpenny life prefixed to an edition of *The English Garden* copied the error in 1813, and recopied it in 1825. This hallmark stamps many subsequent biographies as the ultimate and worthless progeny of Chalmers. The otherwise interesting essay by Louisy in the *Nouvelle Biographie Générale* is of this genealogy; and Sir Leslie Stephen,[25] although he corrects the error as to the place of Mason's birth, calls Chalmers' "the first published life," and bases one cannot tell how much of his own work upon it.

In 1812, fifteen years after Mason's death and a twelvemonth following the publication of his *Works*, Nichols[26] gave the world a rather fragmentary biography of Mason. He filled it out with much quotation from Hurd's edition of Warburton's *Letters* and from *The Biographia Dramatica*, taking the latter, apparently, as a trustworthy source.

The first biography of Mason to which even a shadow of authorization can be attributed, appeared in the *Quarterly* of July, 1816,

[20] Rees's *Encyclop.* is not dated. I used the Philadelphia ed., dated 1810-24 in Harvard Library Catalogue. *Brit. Mus. Cat.* lists an Edinburgh ed., 1819.

[21] Rees's phrasing is somewhat equivocal: "Though this excellent scholar and charming poet honoured us with his friendship, of which we were always ambitious. . . ."

[22] Rees follows the *Britannica* fact for fact and date for date, even in the errors which the *Britannica* took from Aikin and from Bell or the *Gentleman's*. The only significant addition is an estimate of Mason as a critic of music.

[23] Chalmers, *English Poets*, XVIII, 307 *et seq.*

[24] 1815.

[25] *D.N.B.*, *sub* Mason. Stephen does this despite the fact that Hunter in 1831 (*Doncaster*, II, 167) and Cary in 1846 (190) had recognized that "no adequate life" of Mason had been written. See also Dilke (*Athenæum*, May 15, 1851, 155).

[26] Nichols, *Lit. Anecd.*, II, 238.

and forms the rather discursive introduction to a review of his *Works*.[27] From internal evidence, one would suppose the biography untrustworthy; Mason's admission to St. John's is misdated; his B.A. is dated in Old Style; his birth is given to the day in New[28]; the date of his death, instead of April 7, 1797, is given as April 5, 1796; and, at this time, we are told he was 73 years old—a mathematical impossibility for one born in February, 1725. Some of these errors could easily have been corrected by consulting Aikin. Indeed, there is a fine unconscious irony in the *Quarterly's* reference to the "slight and inaccurate sketches" that preceded its own scholarly contribution. On the other hand, the life is quite right upon at least two points: it is the first biography to give the time of Mason's birth accurately to the day; and it states that Mason received his early education at the Grammar School at Hull.[29] Thus it errs in some facts already established, and yet adds new facts of its own that are correct. Not long after Mason's death, his executors had applied to Gifford, the editor of the *Quarterly*, to write his biography[30]; but Gifford had refused, pleading lack of time. Some of Mason's private papers, however, may have come into his hands, and so have supplied a few new facts to an otherwise valueless biography.

Twenty years had gone by since Mason's death; and the lives that followed can be rapidly passed over. The short biography in Campbell's *Specimens* (1819) is chiefly notable for its appreciative tone[31]: Campbell even cites *Caractacus* as superior to the treatment of the same plot in the *Bonduca* of Beaumont and Fletcher. Singer's sketch (1822) is rather more accurate, but no more complete, than most of the other discussions of Mason.[32] Gorton's article (1828)[33] adds to a groundwork of fact borrowed from Aikin, a few bits of spicy gossip — largely erroneous.[34] Hunter's

[27] *Quart. Rev.*, XV, 376 *et seq.*

[28] Cf. Chalmers.

[29] Baker, *Biog. Dram.*, had said that his father gave him his early education.

[30] Prior, *Malone*, 307.

[31] Thomas Campbell, *Specimens of the British Poets*, VII, 275-287. Campbell is not especially accurate as to fact; e.g., *Elfrida* appeared in 1752, not 1753. The *Specimens*, however, were much admired in their day (*Ed. Rev.*, XXXI, 462 *et seq.*).

[32] *British Poets*, LXXVII.

[33] I take this date from the *Brit. Mus. Cat.* I used the edition of 1833 (II, *sub* Mason).

[34] He says that Mason was "dismissed from his chaplainship": Mason actually resigned. He ignores *Musæus*, and gives 1785 instead of 1783 as the date of the publication of *The English Garden* with Burgh's notes.

note in *The Deanery of Doncaster* (1831) can hardly be called a biography; but Hunter seems to have verified, as far as he could, the facts of Mason's life, by Yorkshire records and traditions.[35] Hartley Coleridge's extensive sketch in *Worthies of Yorkshire* is chiefly notable for its last sentence, which has formed a striking quotation for later critics: "With the great poets in any department of poetry, Mason cannot be numbered, yet for many years of his life, he was England's *greatest* living poet." Southey's contributions to Mason scholarship are unimportant except as they reflect, like Campbell's, the good opinion of a fellow Romanticist.[36] Not without reason did Cary, writing in 1846, note "a dearth of authentic biography." [37]

Mason's fame, meanwhile, had spread to the Continent. *Elfrida* and *Caractacus* were done into French prose by the Baroness de Vasse[38]; *The English Garden*, which seems to have been "favorably received in France," [39] was translated in 1788; and several sketches of Mason's life and works have appeared in French books of reference during the nineteenth century.[40] In Germany, also, Mason was not unknown. *Caractacus* seems to have influenced Klopstock in his *Hermannsschlacht*[41]; and in 1783 appeared a translation of *The English Garden*.[42] Three of Mason's dramas,

[35] Hunter, *Doncaster*, II, 167 *et seq.* The genealogy of the Mason family that appeared in this volume is far less accurate than that which appeared in Hunter's posthumous volume *Familiæ Minorum Gentium* (*Harl. Soc. Publ.*, XXXVII, 1894). According to Hunter's statement, this genealogy is based partly upon traditions preserved in the Mason family itself. Perhaps his life of William Mason had in part some such basis also.

[36] E.g., Southey's review of Mathias' *Gray*, with appreciative remarks on Mason's *Memoirs* (*Quart. Rev.*, XI, 304 *et seq.*); *Life of Cowper* (Cowper's *Works*, ed. 1836-7, i-iii); *Commonplace Book*, 4th Ser., 494-496, a mere compilation of fact from well-known sources; *The Doctor*, ch. cxxvi (IV, 258 *et seq.*). This is based on Miller's *Doncaster*. Southey's praise is significant; for Mason was a liberal Whig, and Southey a conservative Tory.

[37] In his *Lives of the English Poets* (1846), Cary included a brief article on Mason. It has no special value.

[38] They appeared in the *Traduction du Théâtre Anglois*. The *Brit. Mus. Cat.* dates *Caractacus* 1785; the *Catalogue Soleinne*, compiled by Lacroix, dates both 1784 (No. 4910).

[39] Gray-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., 413, n.

[40] E.g., *Grand Dict. Univ. du XIXe Siècle*, which combines inaccuracy as to facts with an appreciative criticism of Mason's works. Vapereau, on the other hand, is rather caustic in his comment on Mason's plays.

[41] Walz in *M.L.N.*, XXI, 51-54. Klopstock seems to have read Mason in the original; for I find no German translation.

[42] According to Mensel, VII, v, Leipsig, 1773; but, as all four books appeared in the translation, this date must be wrong. For the date 1783, see Kayser, who credits the work to the pen of Chr. Fr. Weisse.

moreover, appeared in Italian translation: *Elfrida* (1774), *Caractacus* (1823), and *Sappho* (1809, 1810, and 1816). In 1765, William Taylor Howe seems to have recommended Gray's poems and Mason's dramas to Count Algarotti [43] who urged the poet Paradisi of Pisa to translate *Caractacus*[44]; and the translation of 1774 may well have been due to the efforts of Algarotti.[45]

In 1893 appeared the volume of the *Dictionary of National Biography* containing Sir Leslie Stephen's article on Mason. It catalogues the important facts of his life, and gives, as the final summary shows, a fairly complete, if highly condensed, view of his multifarious activities. The statements of fact, however, are not altogether accurate: the date of Mason's matriculation at Cambridge is wrong as to year, month, and day[46]; the date of *Elfrida's* performance is mistranscribed from Genest[47]; and Mason's MS. "chronology" is accepted without verification.[48] Perhaps the most glaring faults are in the bibliography: Chalmers' is mentioned as "the first published life"; whereas at least eight preceded it, including the rather careful work of Aikin. *The Biographia Dramatica* appears as an actual source; and the only two lives that have any shadow of real authority, the article in the *Quarterly* and the note by Hunter, are not even mentioned. Stephen expressly states, moreover, that the *Archæological Epistle* is the work of Baynes; whereas even a cursory reading of Walpole's letters establishes Mason's authorship.[49] For many of his facts, Stephen gives no specific reference; and how many of these are based merely upon Chalmers or some other unreliable source, it is difficult to ascertain.

Stephen's work is the most ambitious biography of recent years; but two more recent sketches deserve some notice. Scott gives a

[43] See F. Viglione, *L'Algarotti e l'Inghilterra,* Naples, 1919.

[44] Gray-Mason *Correspondence,* Mitford ed., 301.

[45] *Caractacus* also underwent the honor of being done into Greek at the hands of G. H. Glass of Oxford, who thereby proved himself one of the best Grecians of the day. Mason seems to have had a certain vogue in America among those who introduced the Romantic Movement. As early as 1808, the Reverend J. S. Buckminster mentions Mason as one of those who "saved the language" during the previous century. *The Monthly Anthology,* July, 1808.

[46] See Appendix B for a comparison of Stephen's dates and mine. Stephen gives Mason's birth in O. S.

[47] Genest, VI, 95, gives Feb. 23, 1779, *not* Feb. 22, as the first revival of *Elfrida.* Sir Leslie ignores the second revival in 1783.

[48] Mason misdated his coming to Cambridge as 1743, instead of 1742.

[49] See Bibl. A, *Arch. Ep.*

two-page account in the Appendix to his *Admissions to St. John's College*.[50] The biography is compiled from the usual sources, supplemented with the Cambridge official records; and the author seems to have ascertained with some care the exact dates of Mason's ecclesiastical preferments. Very different is Austin Dobson's sketch, contributed to the *National Review* for April, 1912.[51] The facts are not carefully sifted[52]; but the essay makes very agreeable reading, and is finely redolent of the eighteenth century.

None of the biographies of Mason are thorough and accurate. Most of them are too brief to exhaust even the bare catalogue of facts; and very few of them offer a consecutive narrative with any attempt at comment or interpretation. Some are mere notes or appendices; some, chance contributions to old periodicals; some, no more than encyclopædia articles.

The criticism of Mason in his own day, and for many years after his death, was, in general, favorable. The early biographers were inclined to echo the conventional compliments along with the careless inaccuracies and other data that came down to them; and some of these critics seem actually to have read more or less of his works and liked them. There are, moreover, a few chance references, usually favorable, down through the early and middle part of the nineteenth century. Such, for instance, is Macaulay's in his review of Moore's *Byron*,[53] where he ranked Mason with half a dozen others as the only real poets of the eighteenth century. Writing in 1866, furthermore, Professor Child spoke of Mason's "judicious and valuable approbation" of the odes of Gray[54]; but the tone of criticism grew more and more adverse; and Lowell declared that Mason and Gray together could not make the former

[50] Scott, *Admissions*, Part III, 530 *et seq.*

[51] *Nat. Rev.*, LIX, 280.

[52] Gray wrote to Mason of "your uncle Balguy" (Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 309, n., and II, 34)—Gray's *penchant* for nicknames is notorious. Dobson read this, it would seem, in dead earnest, and, in his essay, remarks that Dr. Balguy was Mason's uncle. As neither Mason's mother nor either of his step-mothers was named Balguy, the relationship is impossible. See Appendix C. This is but one of Dobson's errors.

[53] Macaulay, *Misc. Works*, Lady Trevelyan ed., New York, n.d., I, 477. The review originally appeared in 1830. Some of the minor periodical criticisms, which further illustrate the decline of his fame during the nineteenth century, may be listed as follows: *Crit. Rev.*, XXI, n.s., 395; *Univ. Mag.*, CVII, 199; *Mon. Rev.*, LXXVIII, 385; *Quart. Rev.*, XV, 381; *Blackwood's*, XXX, 482, and LXXV, 248; *Athenæum*, May 17, 1851; and *Fraser's*, XXVIII, 21.

[54] Gray, *Works*, Child ed., xxxvii.

a poet.[55] In 1881, Sir Leslie Stephen mentioned Mason with Swift, Pope, and Johnson[56]; but, somewhat later,[57] he called the satire on Sir William Chambers a "clever squib" and "a trifle," and declared the *Elfrida* and *Caractacus* would not bear "a moment's inspection." On the other hand, Stephen gave him limited praise: "But Mason, after all, writes like a cultivated scholar, with sensibility to poetic excellence, though without real poetic power; and, if we laugh at his taste, our grandchildren will probably laugh with equal self-satisfaction at ours." Perry's *English Literature in the Eighteenth Century* (1883) ignored Mason, but for a footnote reference[58]; and William Rossetti, in his *Life of Thomas Gray*, referred to Mason as the author of "poems more acceptable to his own generation than to ours." [59]

Toward the end of the century, critical opinion grew distinctly hostile. Gosse, in his *History of Eighteenth Century Literature* (1889),[60] ignoring *Elfrida* and *Caractacus*, ignoring *The English Garden*, the *Odes*, and the *Elegies*, and ignoring the satires that drove George III into a passion,[61] singled out Mason's *Memoirs of Gray*, and, after admitting it to be the first biography "in anything like the full modern sense," objected to its being "timid" and "imperfect." Lounsbury found Mason little more than subject for satire. He is "the most pretentious poetical prig that the eighteenth century produced." [62] His imitation of Chaucer in *Musæus* is "the worst" in the period; and finally: "No student of Chaucer needs be told that language is hardly contemptuous enough to set forth satisfactorily the contemptible character of this imitation." [63]

Twice at least, Saintsbury has treated of Mason. In the *History of Criticism*,[64] after calling him a "tenth-rate object," he damns him to the length of half a page. In the *History of English Prosody*, he confirms the judgment:

> His [Gray's] 'very ineligible friend,' Mr. Mason, one of the paltriest and most pretentious poetasters who ever trespassed on the English Par-

[55] Lowell, *Latest Lit. Essays*, 29.
[56] Stephen, *History of English Thought*, II, 316.
[57] Stephen, *Hours in a Library*, III, 132. (94 in 1909 ed.)
[58] Perry, *op. cit.*, 391.
[59] Rossetti, *Lives of Famous Poets*, 150.
[60] Gosse, *Hist. of 18th Cent. Lit.*, ed. 1891, 359.
[61] Walpole, *Last Journals*, I, 179.
[62] Lounsbury, *Chaucer*, III, 126.
[63] *Ibid.*, III, 128.
[64] Saintsbury, *Hist. of Criticism*, III, 57.

nassus, need not delay us long. His couplets are tinsel; his blank verse is wood; his Hudibrastics are straw; and his odes are plaster. Four good lines stand to Mason's name at the end of twelve bad ones in the epitaph on his wife in Bristol Cathedral; and these four lines are Gray's.[65]

This criticism speaks for itself, and that very definitely. The earlier phrases are somewhat suggestive of Lounsbury's alliterative damnation.[66] Millar's point of view is of a similar nature.[67] The odes of Mason, he says, "have little interest or importance for us save as illustrating the stages by which bald and frigid conventionality may sink into absolute doggerel." [68] Mason's blank verse "displayed potentialities of monotony and dullness which even the heroic couplet could scarcely equal." [69] And the due meed of praise for the *Memoirs of Gray*[70] is very faint.[71]

The historians of early Romanticism are rather more discriminating. Phelps briefly discusses Mason's dramas [72] and his minor poems[73]; but he omits all mention of the pseudo-Elizabethan *Argentile and Curan* and of the Sentimentalism of *The English Garden*. Beers is more detailed than Phelps, and adds a rather careful analysis of *The English Garden*, as an example of that brood of didactic, blank verse poems begotten of Philips' *Cyder* and of Thomson's *Seasons*.[74]

Seccombe's *Age of Johnson*, however, returns to the depreciative attitude. The book contains a fragmentary account of Mason's

[65] Saintsbury, *Hist. of Eng. Prosody*, II, 518.

[66] If the manner of this alliterative denunciation is reminiscent of Lounsbury, the matter is quite as reminiscent of a passage in Mary Lloyd's *Elegies Ancient and Modern* (1903, I, 65): "Mason, the same who wrote a tiresome *Pastoral Elegy* on Pope, was made famous by four lines he did not write. He had labored with more ardor of affection than of poetic genius in the production of an elegy upon his wife, when he took it for revision to his friend, the poet Gray, who changed the last four lines to the present reading." The fact seems to be that Gray contributed the last *three* lines. (Gray-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., 380.) Apparently, Saintsbury copied this error from Miss Lloyd—without giving due credit.

[67] Millar, *The Mid-Eighteenth Century*, 1902. *Periods of European Literature* of which this is volume IX was edited by Saintsbury; and his opinions may have influenced Millar.

[68] Millar, *op. cit.*, 191.

[69] *Ibid.*, 195.

[70] *Ibid.*, 305.

[71] It seems hardly necessary to mention Corbett's *History of English Poetry*, London, 1904. He dates Mason's birth as 1728, refers to Mason and Gray as "fellow-students" at Cambridge, omits his odes, elegies, and dramas, and is very unsatisfactory in his comment on *The English Garden* and the *Memoirs of Gray* (367).

[72] Phelps, *Eng. Rom. Movement*, 98-99.

[73] *Ibid.*, 45, 67, 97-98.

[74] Beers, *Eng. Romanticism in the 18th Century*, 1906, 123 *et seq.*

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life and writings. The tragedies are cited as "negligible"; the date of Mason's birth is given as 1724; and the assertion is made that Mason, in his biography of Gray, tried "to pose as the poetical providence of his friend." [75] Havens, one of the most recent critics of the eighteenth century, joins in the derogatory comment on Mason's personality, and styles him — a little uncharitably — "the vain and much flattered Scroddles." [76]

In some of the most recent works, however, and especially those that are limited to a single aspect of Mason criticism, the tone is more favorable. Courthope's *History of English Poetry* devotes eight pages to Mason.[77] After a brief survey of his life, Courthope summarizes Mason as a poet and dramatist:

> He seems to be much more of a critic than a poet. His dramas (much admired at the time) show regularity of conception and purity of taste, but have little movement, and no root in the genius of the English theatre; his lyrics are entirely wanting in the swift enthusiasm of Collins or the restrained energy of Gray's verse. He is more at home as a follower of Thomson and Akenside, and Warton's praise of his *English Garden* as a composition in which 'didactic poetry is brought to perfection' by the happy combination of judicious precepts with the most elegant ornaments of language and imagery is not undeserved.

Dramatic criticism of Mason has been fairly extensive, but has not gone very deep. Thorndike's *Tragedy* (1908) states some of the most salient facts:

> In the course of the century, there were also a considerable number of plays that turned from French to Greek models. While these cannot be regarded as wholly representative of a reaction from a pseudo to a truer classicism, they certainly offered hardly more resemblance to Voltaire than to Shakespeare. The Greek influence was, however, variously manifested. Adaptations of Euripides were numerous, half a dozen of which were presented at the theatres. In addition, a number of original plays were written, following the Greek form. Most famous of these were two by Gray's friend Mason, *Elfrida* and *Caractacus*. The latter, while stilted and academic, compares favorably in point of literary excellence with most tragedies of the century, and not altogether unworthily takes

[75] Seccombe, *Age of Johnson*, 254. An interesting contribution to Mason literature was made by Tovey, the Gray-scholar, in *The Cambridge History* (X, 153 *et al.*). As Tovey was writing upon *Gray, His Influence*, Mason is relegated to minor—and incomplete—consideration. The curious misspelling of "Skroddler" for "Scroddles" is probably due to the fact that Tovey's death made it impossible for him to revise the proofs.

[76] Havens, *Influence of Milton*, 375.

[77] Courthope, *op. cit.*, VI, 22 *et seq.*

its place in a series that includes *Samson Agonistes* and *Prometheus Unbound*.[78]

Nettleton's *English Drama of the Restoration and Eighteenth Century*,[79] published in 1914, devotes a page or more to Mason. The date of birth is given as 1724; and the treatment in no wise improves upon that of Thorndike. The last two sentences, nevertheless, are significant of the growing appreciation of Mason in very recent years: "Yet his dramatic short-comings are those of his age. Not the play, but the player dominated the Garrick era."

As a musician, William Mason is accounted of enough vitality to merit a short discussion in Grove's *Dictionary of Music;* and, within the last twenty years, two articles on the incidental music to *Caractacus* have appeared in the London *Musical Times*.[80] In his relations to the pictorial arts, Mason seems to have received little fame for his own painting; but his position as one of the main sources of information on Sir Joshua Reynolds' technique, is recognized by several extended quotations in such works as Armstrong's *Reynolds*.[81] The *Cyclopædia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* devotes half a column to Mason. He was, we are told, "regarded by his contemporaries as a poet of more than ordinary genius, but the lack of classical culture [?] prevented his rise." From a political point of view, furthermore, Trevelyan in his *George the Third and Charles Fox* discusses at some length Mason and his work as an "amateur agitator." [82]

If Mason biography has been inaccurate, Mason criticism has been inconsistent — at times almost erratic. No one has collected the extensive contemporaneous materials to compose a critical biography, or subjected his works to detailed study to show the thread of coherence in the diversity of his activities or to evaluate his actual accomplishment. The field is open; and it must be covered before any thorough work can be done in the history of English culture in the eighteenth century; for Mason, presenting as he does a lively embodiment of the culture of his class and age, is a figure too typical [83] to be ignored. Such is the *apologia pro vita sua* for the present work.

[78] Thorndike, *op. cit.*, 297.
[79] Nettleton, *op. cit.*, 243-244.
[80] Feb. 1, 1899, and Nov. 1, 1901.
[81] Armstrong, *op. cit.*, 42, 47, 48, 142-143.
[82] Trevelyan, *op. cit.*, II, 213-214, 273.
[83] Working independently, from a different point of view, Havens, also, seems to have been struck with Mason's typicality. Havens, *Influence of Milton*, 460.

CHAPTER II

MASON'S EARLY LIFE: 1725-1750

ACCORDING to his various biographers,[1] William Mason was born in at least two places and upon several occasions. The places have been given as "Hull in Yorkshire,"[2] and as "St. Trinity Hall, in the East Riding of Yorkshire,"[3] with the variant, "St. Trinity-hall."[4] The times appear as "about 1726,"[5] as 1725,[4] and as February 12, 1724.[6] Mason himself established the place as Hull,[7] and the date as "Feb. 12, old style, 1724."[8] In short, he was born at the seaport of Kingston-upon-Hull in the East Riding of Yorkshire on February twenty-third, 1725, N. S.; and the parish register of the town bears the entry of baptism: "1724/5 March 11 [O. S.] William, son of William Mason Vicar."[9]

Mason's genealogy has been much discussed.[10] A chance remark in his letters[11] informs us that his family had lived at Hull for several generations; and consensus of evidence shows that his father

[1] For a consideration of these in their interrelation, see Chapter I, The Vogue of Mason.

[2] Baker, *Biog. Dram.*, I, 303.

[3] *Memoirs* prefixed to *Eng. Gard.*, 1813.

[4] Chalmers, *Gen. Biog. Dict.*

[5] Baker, *Biog. Dram.*, I, 303.

[6] Stephen in *D.N.B.*

[7] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, I, 318.

[8] *Ibid.*, II, 411. See also Appendix A. The entries in this MS. chronology are not all to be accepted without question; but it is hardly to be supposed that Mason would forget the date of his own birth. This statement, moreover, agrees with his being sixty-five in Nov., 1790 (*Harcourt Papers*, VII, 177), with the dates of his birthday sonnets, *Works*, I, 128, 129, 131, and with Gisborne's statement in *Poems Sacred and Moral*, London, 1803, 147.

[9] I obtained a certified copy of the entry from the parish clerk of Holy Trinity. This in itself would be proof of the approximate date of birth. For religious reasons, children were baptised as soon as possible. Eton, in fact, used such extracts from parish records to prove that applicants for election were less than sixteen years old. (Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 218.)

[10] Hunter (*Doncaster*, II, 167) must be taken *cum grano*; and the account in *Familiæ Minorum Gentium*, *Harl. Soc. Pub.*, XXXVI, is not as full as Foster's. *The Diary of Abraham De La Pryme*, (218, n.) gives a table that seems fairly trustworthy as far as it goes. Numerous entries in *Notes and Queries*, 4th Ser., XII, 87 etc., are of value. Histories of Yorkshire and of Hull afford an occasional clue; and, sometimes, I have been able to find evidence in contemporary documents. Foster's *Yorkshire Pedigrees* seems final.

[11] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, I, 318; the date of Mason's death is given wrong, however. See *N. and Q.*, 6th Ser., VII, 388.

was the William Mason (1694-1753) who became vicar of Holy Trinity in 1722. The identity of his grandfather Hugh [12] is established as Collector of Customs at Hull in 1696[13]; he may have been the "Alderman Mason" of 1699[14]; and he undoubtedly bought the rectory of Sutton, tithes, and site of the college, on June 1, 1709.[15] Mason's great-grandfather was Robert Mason (1633-1719), Sheriff of Hull in 1675, Mayor in 1681 and 1696,[16] and Alderman in 1685.[17] December, 1712, is the date of his will, in which he declares himself "of Welton, gent."[18]; and on 16 November, 1694, he gave £1, 14s, 8d, to the poor of that place.[19] Mason's great-great-grandfather was Valentine Mason, born in November, 1583. He seems to have come from Oxfordshire.[20] From December, 1615, to August, 1623, he was Vicar of Driffield; and was Vicar of Elloughton from that time until his death in 1639.[21] He married Grace Rhodes at St. Johns Beverley, 11 October, 1626.[22] The collateral branches of the family are not without names of distinction. Henry Verelst, sometime Governor of Bengal, Sir Charles Kent, Bart., and Erasmus Darwin the poet, were among Mason's cousins; and he had family connections with Lord Holdernesse and with Archbishop Hutton.[23]

The Mason family was certainly one of distinction. Foster ascribes to them the right to bear arms: "Or, a lion rampant with two heads azure; crest: a mermaid with comb and glass proper"; and Berry quarters this shield with two others: "first per fesse, or and gules, a lion, rampant, counterchanged; second, or, a lion, rampant, with two heads azure; third, or, a chevron gules between

[12] Scott, *Admissions*, II, 203.
[13] *N. and Q.*, 4th Ser., XII, 87.
[14] J. Tickell, *History of Hull*, Hull, 1796, 595, and 11th report of *Hist. MSS. Com.*, Appendix, Part 5, London, 1887, 128.
[15] De La Pryme, *Diary*, 234, *g*.
[16] *Ibid.*, 218, n.
[17] *Charters and Letters Patent granted to Kingston-upon-Hull*, tr. by J. R. Boyle, 1905.
[18] De La Pryme, *Diary*, 218, n.
[19] *Ibid.*
[20] See *D.N.B.* and *N. and Q.*, 8th Ser., VI, 148.
[21] De La Pryme, *Dairy*, 218, n.
[22] *Ibid.*
[23] As far as available sources allow, I have worked out in Appendix C the collateral branches that are in any way connected with this biography. After compiling the appendix, I finally had access to Foster's *Yorkshire Pedigrees*, and was gratified to find that this authoritative work supported, with considerable additions, almost every detail of my own previous gleanings. Aside from Hunter, *Doncaster*, II, 167, n., the authorities agree in all major points. The question of William Mason's relationship to Combe seems to have been settled fairly definitely in the negative. *N. and Q.*, 4th Ser., III, 547-548.

three snails sable; the fourth as the first."[24] Fairbairn gives "a mermaid proper" as the Mason crest,[25] and mentions it particularly as belonging to the Mason family of Greenwich, Kent, and the Mason family of Hemingford and Cuckney.[26]

Mason's father, William Mason the elder, was born at Hull in 1694, bred at Beverley under Mr. Lambert, and admitted pensioner to St. Johns, Cambridge, on March 15, 1712.[27] He was made vicar of Holy Trinity in 1722,[28] and must have been a divine of some eminence; for Holy Trinity was a living of considerable importance, and there is, moreover, record of a sermon dedicated to him.[29] The parish dates back to the thirteenth century; and the building is a handsome Gothic pile.[30] The living was probably valuable: in any case, the family seem to have been comfortable.[31] In 1734, the elder Mason founded "the Vicar's school" in commemoration of the Revolution of 1688[32]; and both the benevolence and the solid Whig principles which its founding implies, seem to have descended, in due course, to his son.

Of Mason's mother we know little, except that her maiden name was Mary Wild, and that she was the first of the vicar's three wives.[33] She died in childbed the Christmas following his own birth (1725).[34] The vicar married again, one Sarah Haynes (d. 1741);[35] by whom he had no issue. About 1747, he married his third wife, Mary Ryles (d. 1776),[36] by whom he had a daughter Ann, afterwards wife of the Rev. Henry Dixon. Mason, then,

[24] W. Berry, *Ency. Herald.*, II, *sub* Mason. I have not been able to identify the two coats quartered with the one Foster gives. Neither of them belongs to the Huttons of Marske, whose coat appears in Foster.

[25] Foster attributes this crest also to the Myers family of Gristhorpe, Yorks.

[26] J. Fairbairn, *Book of Crests*, revised by A. C. Fox-Davies, Edinburgh, 1892, I, 301. This crest may or may not have belonged to the Masons of Hull.

[27] Scott, *Admissions*, II, 203.

[28] *Ibid.*, III, 106, no. 40 (Appendix), and *N. and Q.*, 4th Ser., XII, 87.

[29] Davies, *York Press*, 223.

[30] See Greenwood, *Hull*, Hull and London, 1835, 57, 62, frontis. See also Tickell, *History of Hull*, 785 *et seq.*

[31] Apparently, William Mason the elder left a considerable estate, Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 238.

[32] Greenwood, *Hull*, 109. In 1834, it regularly afforded education to about fifty boys. This school is not to be confused with the old Grammar School founded and endowed in 1486 (Sheahan's *History of Hull*, 581). For a brief life of Mason's father, see Greenwood, *Hull*, 173. Tickell, *History of Hull*, 832, also gives a brief account.

[33] Foster, *Yorkshire*, II, Masons of Hull.

[34] See Appendix A. *N. and Q.*, 4th Ser., XII, 87, agrees, but may not be based on independent witness.

[35] Foster, *loc. cit.*

[36] *Ibid.*

his father, and stepmother, comprised the family up to about the time of Mason's departure for the university. There is no proof that the relationship was other than cordial; and Gray later chided Mason for bestowing so much "care and kindness" on his second stepmother.[37]

During this early period, his dearest friend seems to have been a certain young Marmaduke Pricket. They were "brought up together from infancy"[38]; and Pricket's death in 1753, simultaneous with that of Mason's father, was a great blow to the young poet.

Mason "imbibed the first elements of classical literature" at the "grammar-school" of Hull.[39] In this same school, about a century before, the poet Marvell, like Mason a liberal and a Whig, had received from his father who was master, his preparatory training for Cambridge.[40] It had been founded and endowed in 1486; and, with a brief interruption during the Reformation, had regularly given the sons of freemen [41] a classical education. It had a library, and its schoolroom was reputed one of the best in England.[42] Latin was the chief subject, combined, perhaps, with a little mathematics.[43]

A large part of Mason's education, however, was extra-scholastic, and this part proved on the whole quite as important in his later life. His father instructed him in poetry, painting, and music. One of his early poems, indeed, took the form of an epistolary address to the elder Mason:

> Alike when active fancy try'd to trace
> The rural landscape and th' impassion'd face,
> How to my aid he brought each written rule,
> And free design of painting's various school?
> How when my thoughts first flow'd in tinkling chime,
> He smooth'd the verse, reform'd each faulty rhyme . . .[44]

[37] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 239.

[38] Gray-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., 18.

[39] Mason was entered at St. Johns, July 1, 1741, (see Scott, *Admissions*), as bred at Hull under Mr. Blyth, who was at the time head master. Tickell, *Hull*, 831. Cf. *Quart. Rev.*, XV, 376 *et seq.*

[40] See *D.N.B.*, *sub* Marvell.

[41] Sons of non-freemen were instructed at a higher rate (Greenwood, *Hull*, 108); but Mason, as a clergyman's son, was admitted as a freeman (Tickell, *Hull*, 830).

[42] Tickell, *Hull*, 825 *et seq.*, and Greenwood, *Hull*, 107 *et seq.*

[43] Greenwood, *op. cit.*, 108.

[44] *Epistle Addressed to the Author's Father, sent from London in the year*

Again in middle age, Mason—somewhat naïvely—apostrophized Poetry and Painting as "ye sister powers!" that "smiled auspicious at my birth" and dropped the magic seeds of fancy "o'er my cradle." [45] He exercised his *penchant* for poetry and painting by translating Dufresnoy's *De Arte Graphica*, a work "begun in very early youth," taken up from time to time,[46] and finally published late in life with notes by Sir Joshua Reynolds.[47] Of his juvenile reading, we know little except for a vague reference many years after to "Quarles' *Emblems*, a book I studied much in my infancy." [48] The knowledge he later displayed of Continental languages may have had its source in this period. If the translation of Gray's *Elegy* into German prose be not a false attribution,[49] he must have had at least a pedestrian knowledge of that language. He talked French at Hamburg in the 1750's,[50] and displayed a smattering of Italian in the '70's.[51]

The first seventeen years of Mason's life, before his going to Cambridge in 1742, seem to have been both profitable and happy. He came from a highly respected family; his father was in good circumstances; and the home-life seems to have run smoothly. He received a good grammar-school education, and also instruction in poetry, music, and painting, and perhaps the modern languages. His father was an important influence in molding his future. The vicar gave him his interest in the fine arts which later expressed itself in so many forms, and grounded his political attitude in those Whig principles for which he always stood. The founding of the charity school suggests that his father was a follower of Shaftesbury, and so, perhaps, implanted in Mason the Sentimentalism that blossomed so luxuriantly in his dramas and poems.

On July 1, 1742, Mason was admitted pensioner at St. Johns College, Cambridge.[52] His first tutor was Mr. Wrigley.[53] Mason's

1746. See *Works*, 1811, I, 173. The poem may have been inspired by Milton's *Ad Patrem*, especially lines 78 *et seq.*; but the similarity is not close enough to reduce Mason's work to the category of a mere literary exercise, without biographical significance.

[45] *Works*, I, 211-212.

[46] *Works*, III, 9.

[47] See *Works*, 1811, III; Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VIII, 12; and Chapter XIII, Mason's Relations to Music and the Pictorial Arts.

[48] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 18.

[49] *Brit. Mus. Cat., sub* Mason.

[50] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 264.

[51] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., V, 481, 487; VI, 230.

[52] Scott, *Admissions*, *sub* date. This is O. S. July 12 N. S. Sir Leslie Stephen, in *D.N.B.*, gives June 30, 1743; I know not on what authority.

[53] Mitford misspells it Migley, Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, II, 411.

experiences on coming up to the university can perhaps best be inferred from those of Gray, eight years before:

I warrant, you imagine that People in one College, know the Customs of others; but you mistake, they are quite little Societies by themselves: ye Dresses, Language, Customs, &c. are different in different Colledges: what passes for Wit in one, would not be understood if it were carried to another: thus the Men of Peter-house, Pembroke & Clare-hall of course must be Tories; those of Trinity, Rakes; of Kings, scholars; of Sidney, Whigs; of St. Johns [Mason's college], Worthy men & so on: now what to say about this Terra Incognita, I don't know; First then, it is a great old Town, shaped like a spider, with a nasty Lump in the middle of it, & half a dozen scambling long legs: it has 14 Parishes, 12 Colledges, & 4 halls, these Halls only entertain Students, who after a term of years are elected into the Colledges: There are 5 ranks in the University, subordinate to the Vice-chancellour, who is chose annually: These are [Masters, Fellows, Fellow-Commoners, Pension]ers, & Sizers; The Masters of Colledges are twelve gray-hair'd Gentlefolks who are all mad with Pride; the Fellows are sleepy, drunken, dull, illiterate Things; the Fellow-Com: are imitatours of the Fellows, or else Beaux, or else nothing: the Pension: grave, formal Sots, who would be thought old; or else drink Ale, & sing Songs against ye Excise. The Sizers are Graziers Eldest Sons, who come to get good Learning, that they may all be Archbishops of Canterbury: these last two Orders are qualified to take Scholarships; one of which your humble serv^{t} has had given him: first, they led me into the hall, & there I swore Allegiance to ye King; then I went to a room, where I took 50000 Latin Oaths, such as, to wear a Square Cap, to make 6 verses upon the Epistle or Gospel every Sunday morning, to chant very loud in Chappel, to wear a clean Surplice, &c: &: Now as to eating: the Fellow-Com: dine at the Fellows table; their commons is worth 6s-4d a-week. The Pensions pay but 2s-4d. If any body don't like their Commons, they send down into the Kitchen to know what's for Sizing; the cook sends up a Catalogue of what there is; & they chuse what they please: They are obliged to pay for Commons whether they eat or no. there is always Plenty enough. The Sizers feast upon the leavings of the rest; . . .[54]

Gray's reflection upon the fellows as "drunken, dull, illiterate things," was only too true. The powerful Whig families had full sway at court; and the university battened upon their patronage, regardless of scholarship and discipline. Such was the *régime* of the *fainéant* Duke of Somerset in the 1740's.

[54] *Correspondence of Gray, etc.*, Toynbee ed., I, 4. Gray to Walpole, Oct. 31, 1734. This tallies with Cowper's description. See *Letters*, Wright ed., II, 269, 273.

University scholarship in the mid-century was certainly suffering a relapse from the days of Newton and Bentley.[55] Walpole, even as an undergraduate, damned Oxford and Cambridge as "two barbarous towns o'er-run with rusticity and mathematics. The creatures are so used to a circle that they plod in the same eternal round, with their whole view confined to a punctum."[56] West was "surprised to hear such poor paltry harangues as are uttered once a week from the Rostra of this Nurse of Science."[57] Gray compared Cambridge to the "desolation of Babylon"[58]:

> But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there.

Ashton declared that "the Learning of this Age, seems to be no more than Comments on that of the last."[59] The necessary examinations were either omitted or run off in the most perfunctory fashion.[60] Richard Cumberland, grandson of Bentley, coming up to college a few years after Mason, fared no better than Gray. Of his experience with his tutor, the Rev. Dr. Morgan, he wrote in later life: "As a tutor, I had few communications with him, for the gout afforded him not many intervals of ease, and with the exception of a few trifling readings in Tully's *Offices*, by which I was little edified, and to which I paid little or no attention, he left me and one other pupil . . . to choose and peruse our studies, as we saw fit. This dereliction of us was inexcusable. . . ." In the course of time, Cumberland was turned over to Dr. Young, Professor of Oratory, and later Bishop of Norwich. "What Morgan made a very light concern, Young made an absolute sinecure, for from him I never received a single lecture. . . . He gave me free leave to be idle."[61] Even the sciences no longer received proper attention.[62] Is it any wonder that, in 1749, Gray wrote Warton with serious jocularity: "The spirit of Laziness, (the spirit

[55] Bentley died a very old man in 1742.

[56] *Correspondence of Gray, etc.*, Toynbee ed., I, 1.

[57] *Ibid.*, I, 45.

[58] *Ibid.*, I, 113; Isaiah, xiii, 21.

[59] *Ibid.*, I, 127.

[60] *Ibid.*, I, 28-29.

[61] Cumberland, *Memoirs*, 46.

[62] Richard Davies, *The General State of Education in the Universities*, Bath, 1759, is a plea for better conditions and a larger share of scientific education. Davies was answered by the anonymous *Observations on the Present State of the English Universities*, London, 1759. The reply is not convincing or complete.

of this place) begins to possess even me, that have so long declaimed against it: yet has it not so prevailed, but that I feel discontent with myself, that *ennui* that ever accompanies it in its beginnings. Time will settle my conscience; time will reconcile me to this languid companion; we shall smoke; we shall tipple; we shall doze together. We shall have our little jokes like other people, and our long stories; brandy will finish what port begun. . . ."[63] No wonder that in later years, Greene called upon Mason and Gray to lament the sad state of the university.[64]

General living conditions, moreover, were bad. In 1738, Gray found Cambridge "very ugly," "very dirty," and "very dull,"[65] and again, he refers to "this silly, dirty place." Anstey's view of the university appears in a trenchant couplet in his *New Bath Guide:*

> Dean Spavin, Dean Mangey and Dr. De Squirt,
> Were all sent from *Cambridge* to rub off their Dirt. . . .

Walpole's impressions seem to have been entirely encrusted in one ubiquitous memory of dirt. In 1763, he was astonished at the cleanliness, and felt that he could live "even at Cambridge again."[66] Low scholarship and poor conditions had their natural corollary in general laxity of manners.

Mullinger's *History of St. John's College* is eloquent concerning the "low state of discipline."[67] John Edwards is quoted as saying that half the members of the university oscillated between mental depression and wild excess. "There can be no question," Mullinger says, "that throughout the eighteenth century the usual device to escape from ennui was the wine cup; and hard drinking was followed by its frequent concomitant—loss of mental equilibrium, if not complete derangement. In 1762, there was 'rioting' in the dormitories; in 1767, it was found that two of the fellows entitled by their standing to take their place on the seniority, were disqualified by insanity"[68]; and that curious compilation, *Excerpta è statutis Academiæ Cantabrigensis præfectorum interpretationibus senatus decretis . . . Cantabrigiæ, 1770,* is scarcely more than

[63] Gray *Letters,* Tovey ed., I, 196.
[64] *Crit. Rev.,* XVII, 72.
[65] *Correspondence of Gray, etc.,* Toynbee ed., I, 183.
[66] Gray *Letters,* Tovey ed., III, 15, n.
[67] London, 1901, 225 *et seq.*
[68] Mullinger, *St. John's College,* London, 1901, 225 *et seq.*

a list of acts of the university powers against drunkenness and disorderly conduct. One is not surprised that Sir Leslie Stephen refers to the dons of the period as "that ale-drinking, tobacco-smoking element amongst the jolly fellows of the combination room." [69]

Of Mason's immediate reaction to the university, we know nothing, except that he blamed the bad conditions on "Jacobitism, and its concomitant hard drinking." [70] Undoubtedly, in due course, he came to have an affection for the place[71]; but Mason's Cambridge was not, on the whole, the characteristic Cambridge we have just described. To be sure, many years later, he wrote to Walpole ". . . I in my time have kept worse company than you ever did, and am more used to vulgarity," [72] and this may refer to his Cambridge days; but the weight of evidence shows that he generally ignored the more riotous side of college life for literary and artistic pursuits, quite as one would expect from his previous bringing up. Whitehead's *Ode to Mr. Mason* [73] pictures him as a somewhat æsthetic youth, a little indolent, a little visionary, the sort of person who in the 1880's would have expressed his essential uniqueness by imitating the sunflower cult. Indeed, Mason was a ripe subject for the Sentimentalism he later preached. His wide interest in the fine arts is further witnessed by Garrick's verses *Upon Mr. Mason's Taking Orders* [74] and by the following *Epigram on Mr. Mason* which appeared in December, 1749,[75] with a grandiloquent heading parodied from *Lycidas:*

> Who wou'd not sing in Mason's praise? he knows
> Himself to sing and build the lofty rhyme.
>
> Soft harmony has Handel crown'd
> Titian for painting is renoun'd,
> And Dryden for Poetick ease;
> These all with different beauties please;
> But Mason can at once inspire

[69] Stephen, *Hours in a Library*, III, 113.

[70] Gray, *Poems*, Mason ed., 1778, II, 16.

[71] *Works*, I, 27, 30.

[72] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VIII, 27.

[73] Dodsley, *Miscellany*, 1758, I, 312.

[74] See *The New Foundling Hospital for Wit*, II, 156.

[75] *London Mag.*, XVIII, 572. The authorship is uncertain. The epigram may possibly have been sarcastic; but, in either case, it proves the breadth of his interests.

The pen, the pencil and the lyre;
And Dryden's ease the nine impart
With Titian's skill, and Handel's art.

Cambridge
Dec. 1. Granticola.

Not only painting and music engaged his spare time, but drama and serious reading also. Many years later, Mason, in writing to Walpole from York, pictures his Cambridge holidays: "Thirty years ago I used to leave Cambridge for London whenever I had five guineas to spare, on what they called a scheme. My scheme was to dine every day at a chop-house behind St. Clement's at two, in order to be in the middle of the pit at four, there to remain with all the impatience of expectation till the curtain drew up; and this I continued to do daily while my money lasted, and with as much regularity as I at present go morning and afternoon to see the ancient maiden gentlewomen and decayed tradesmen of this famous city of York mumble their matins and their vespers."[76] When Gray, in his early college days, was "set a longing" with Walpole's accounts of "plays and operas and masquerades," [77] he discovered that there was but one man in his college who had ever seen London! The university seems to have been replete with well-born rusticity, in an age when rusticity meant boorishness.

Of Mason's reading in college, we have some direct evidence. Several years later, Gray twits him with his phrase "moral excellence," and says it is a "reminiscence of the bad books he read at St. John's." [78] Tovey is probably right in suggesting that the "bad books" were the philosophical works of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson. Here, again, is an obvious source of Mason's Sentimentalism. The following letter,[79] moreover, to his friend Bryant shows some reading of Bolingbroke, and at least a superficial interest in Warburton, whom he had probably met,[80] as well as in other people and things worth a young man's attention:

[76] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., I, 169. The last clause refers to Mason's duties as canon of the Cathedral of York, an office that he held at the time of writing.

[77] *Correspondence of Gray, etc.*, Toynbee ed., I, 20.

[78] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 346, and II, 237, n.

[79] *Gent. Mag.*, LXXI, 683.

[80] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 237, n.

St. Johns, Nov. 13, 1747.

Dear Bryant: [81]

Your letter found me luckily at my return to college after an absence of the six summer months. I need not say how much it rejoiced me to find from it that you enjoyed your health and liked your climate. [In the West Indies? See below.] You mention nothing (and indeed from your writing seem to have nothing) of your hip. I believe you left that with your old chum, for generally speaking, this last year I have been in low spirits, and though never to be called ill, always fancying myself so.

You gave me a very indeterminate order about your prints; however, I gave directions to the *old one* (who came here last week to speechify) to buy you as many as would furnish a room; those from Vandyke are the best and cheapest I know. I desired him also to put up in the same packet a poem [*Musæus*] altered since you saw it, and published last March. It met with greater success than I could have imagined; for it passed through three impressions, though not specified in the title, and, I am told, is now out of print again. I have writ nothing since I saw you worth sending; but perhaps my next may employ the rest of my letter in giving you an account of what variation there is in the situation of myself and the rest of your friends since you left England. As to myself, I have had the honor, since I came here last, to be elected by the Fellows of Pembroke into their society; but the Master, who has the power of a negative, has made use of it on this occasion, because he will not have an *extraneus* when they have fit persons in their own college. The Fellows say they have a power from their statutes *indifferenter eligere ex utraque academia*, and are going to try it with him at common law, or else get the king to appoint a visitor. If this turns out well, it will be a very lucky thing for me, and much better than a Platt, which I came hither with an intention to sit for, for they are reckoned the best fellowships in the university. Another thing has happened, which there is also a probability may some time be of service to me, and that is, Dr. Herring's removal to Canterbury and Dr. Hutton's to York. This too may, I hope, affect Cayley, who had the bad luck, about seven months ago, to be rusticated for a *small riot*, but, I hope, will now be soon admitted again.

Dr. Burrell, I am told, gets great reputation and business at Leicester and has had the fortune to perform several remarkable cures.

Allen has got a small curacy at Mitcham, in Surrey; and Wood one at Brokstead, in Essex.

Bourne has done the foolishest thing that ever sensible man was guilty of. He made solicitations to the Duke of Devonshire for a chaplainship

[81] Probably Jacob Bryant (1715-1804), Gray's friend, the classical scholar (cf. Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 279, 290, and *D.N.B.*). The intimate tone of this letter, however, suggests rather a younger man, perhaps Henry Bryant, botanist (1721-99); but we do not know that the latter ever formed one of the Gray-Mason circle. Both men were at Cambridge in the 1740's.

to a man of war, and is now sailed in Ruby, in Boscawen's squadron, for the East Indies. This he did unknown to most of his friends, and without any view of other interest than the bare salary.

I can recollect nothing particular of anybody else, and am conscious that my letter is not half long enough to deserve carriage to the West Indies; yet how to make it longer I do not know; for what assistance political news would give me I have no great desire to try, and as to literary I believe it would be very small. Warburton has published the Old Woman's book against Dr. Rutherford, which bears a very good character; he has also writ a very remarkable Preface to it: this, with an edition of Shakespeare, is all that he has done. Lord Bolingbroke has advertised a collection of political tracts; but I suppose they will be only such as have before made their appearance in the weekly papers. Mr. Littleton has wrote a letter to Mr. West on St. Paul's conversion, which also bears a great character. I do not know anything else worth mentioning, except that Dr. Rutherford is taking in subscriptions for his lectures (if that be). The same person is also made chaplain to the prince; & Rothery to the Duke of Somerset, who has given Dr. Fry a great living in Yorkshire, made vacant by the Bishop of Bangor's translation.

Your news about poor Hook reached me two months before yours. I had the melancholy employment when at Hull to condole with the family; the sister was most remarkably affected by it.

Dear Bryant, write me by all opportunities. I told your brother, when I went up in March to London and carried his letter with me, that I should write from thence, but was prevented which was the occasion of the mistake. Whether Lindsey writ or no, I do not know; but I confess I did not. However, I will promise to be more punctual for the future. Believe me with the utmost affection, dear Bryant, your sincere friend.

W. Mason.

Direct for me to this college; and it would be better if you wrote upon it, to be left and forwarded with Mr. Powell; by which means, if I be in the country or at Pembroke, I shall the sooner and safer receive it. Mr. Peele and all friends desire their compliments.

Mason, however, did not confine his literary activity to reading; and a number of his early writings have come down to us. The translation of Dufresnoy's *De Arte Graphica*, may have been continued at this time.[82] *Il Bellicoso* and *Il Pacifico*, two imitations of Milton, were written early in 1744[83]; and *Musæus*, an elegy on Pope's death, somewhat in the manner of *Lycidas*, came later

[82] *Works*, III, 9.

[83] *Works*, I, 158. So far as I can find, the dates Mason gave in the *Poems* of 1797, are trustworthy. They were reprinted in the *Works* of 1811.

in the same year.[84] In 1746, the year of his graduation, he wrote *The Birth of Fashion*,[85] an *Epistolary Address* to his father,[86] *Stanzas written on the Banks of the Cam*,[87] and an *Ode on Leaving St. Johns College, Cambridge*[88]—all in more or less Neo-classical vein. In 1747, he composed an *Ode to a Water Nymph*,[89] and an *Ode on Expecting to return to Cambridge*,[90] the latter a true Pindaric.[91] He wished, moreover, to edit Milton's minor poems, and wrote Dodsley: ". . . if you think that it would sell at present, I wou'd willingly give you my assistance either for a preface or Notes or anything that shou'd be thought necessary, & this merely for the sake of the incomparable Poet for whom I am not content with having considered and praised as the Author of *Paradise Lost* alone." But Tonson owned the copyright,[92] and so Milton lost this tribute from his young disciple. In 1748, he composed his first sonnet,[93] and, in the same year, *Isis, a Monologue*.[94] In 1749, he wrote the *Ode for Music*, performed in the Senate-House at the installation of Newcastle as Chancellor.[95] About this time, Mason probably began work upon *Elfrida*, a sentimental tragedy with Greek technique and an Anglo-Saxon subject.[96]

A number of his poems, moreover, were published. In 1747, at the age of twenty-two, Mason published *Musæus*,[97] at his own expense.[98] The shades of Chaucer, Spenser, and Milton, mourn at the grave of Pope; and the imitations of the styles of these poets lend the poem especial importance. It passed through three editions in a twelvemonth, came out in Dodsley's *Collection*, and

[84] *Works*, I, 3.
[85] *Ibid.*, I, 149.
[86] *Ibid.*, I, 172.
[87] *Ibid.*, I, 176.
[88] *Ibid.*, I, 27.
[89] *Ibid.*, I, 23.
[90] *Ibid.*, I, 30.
[91] For the significance of this, see Chapter VIII, Mason's Minor Poems.
[92] Straus, *Dodsley*, 114-115. Tonson's copyright had, strictly speaking, expired April 10, 1731, according to the act of Queen Anne; but copyright law was in a chaotic condition; and, in 1739, Lord Hardwicke had given Tonson an injunction in support of his claims. See an article by the present author in *M.L.N.*, XXXVI, 146 *et seq.*
[93] *Works*, I, 121. This would put it fairly early in the sonnet revival of the mid-century.
[94] *Works*, I, 179. Originally called *Isis, an Elegy*.
[95] *Works*, I, 33; Straus, *Dodsley*, 339.
[96] At any rate, *Elfrida* was finished early in 1751. Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 210. For a discussion of it, see Chapter IX, Mason's Dramas.
[97] See Bibl. A, *sub Musæus*, *sub* Collection, and *sub* Select.
[98] Straus, *Dodsley*, 114-115 and 334-335. See *Gent. Mag.*, April, 1747, 202, for listing of publications.

was reprinted in that publisher's later miscellanies. Mason included it in most of the volumes of his *Poems*. It appeared in an Edinburgh collection in 1767, and in Pratt's *Cabinet* as late as 1808. *Musæus* was the occasion of Mason's friendship with Gray,[99] and helped to give him an introduction to the Reverend Mr. Birch and to Dr. Mead.[100] It was, moreover, favorably reviewed, and admired by a wide circle of readers, even down to the end of the century.[101] Not without reason did Gray declare that it carried a promise, at least, of something good to come.[102]

None of Mason's other early minor poems made so much noise in the world. The *Ode to a Water Nymph*[103] appeared with *Musæus* in various Dodsley collections.[104] *Il Pacifico* came out in the *Gratulatio Academiæ* in 1748; *Il Bellicoso* in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1771[105] and in Pearch's *Collection*[106]: both were included in the *Poems* of 1797, in the *Muse's Bower*,[107] and in the *Works* of 1811.[108] Mason's *Ode on the Installation of the Duke of Newcastle* was first published at Cambridge, July 3, 1749.[109] It appeared in the Dodsley *Collection* of 1755,[110] with the *Odes* of 1756, in the Edinburgh miscellany of 1767, and in most of the editions of Mason's *Poems*. *Isis, a Monologue*, was first published at London in 1749, and quickly ran through three editions.[111] It appeared with Warton's reply in *The Union*, 1766, in Mendez's *Collection*, 1767,[112] and in Ritson's *English Anthology*, 1794. It was an attack on Oxford's Jacobite proclivities, especially manifested at the time of Prince Charles's invasion. For all its notoriety, the poem was merely occasional

[99] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 187, n.

[100] Nichols, *Illust.*, II, 146. For a brief sketch of Dr. R. Mead (1673-1754), see J. Ashton, *Social Life in the Reign of Queen Anne*, London, 1897, 322.

[101] For a discussion of the literary value and contemporary vogue of the poem, see Chapter VIII.

[102] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 187.

[103] Its first form, as Dobson says, certainly suggests that Mason was at the time in hopes of Lord Lyttelton's patronage. *Nat. Rev.*, LIX, 283-284.

[104] See Bibl. A, *sub* Collection.

[105] *Gent. Mag.*, XLI, 183.

[106] See *Works*, I, 158. See also Bibl. A, *sub* Collection of Poems, 1783, I, 213 and 220.

[107] *Muses' Bower*, London, 1809, I, 95, 103.

[108] Many of these early poems were first printed in the *Poems* of 1797; and they were all reprinted in the *Works* of 1811.

[109] Straus, *Dodsley*, 339.

[110] Dodsley, *Collection*, 1755, IV, 269.

[111] Straus, *Dodsley*, 115, 337. It was originally called *Isis, an Elegy*, *Works*, I, 179, n.

[112] Mendez, 274. See Bibl. A, *sub* Collection.

and so had no lasting interest. Indeed, out of compliment to Warton,[113] Mason regularly omitted it from his *Poems*.[114]

Mason's literary endeavors were at once the cause and the result of his possessing an enviable circle of friends. Of his first tutor, Wrigley, we hear little; but his place seems later to have been taken by Powell and perhaps by Balguy, "two young men highly distinguished at the time in the University, and afterwards in the religious and learned world."[115] Hurd refers to Powell as "my worthy friend"[116]; and Balguy was a friend of Warburton's, was highly praised by Hurd, Parr, and Joseph Warton, and was "regarded by Gray as a bishop *in posse*."[117] Mason's two tutors seem to have made him acquainted with Hurd and with Dr. Heberden.[118] According to Mason, Hurd saw "the fresh seeds" of his poetic talents and fed them "with the fost'ring dew of praise."[119] Dr. Heberden introduced him to Mr. Birch and so to Dr. Mead,[120] whose "library of antiquities"[121] Mason desired to explore. Hurd, moreover, paid him the supreme honor of introducing him to Warburton, who "reserved a set of Pope's works for him."[122] In 1747, a common friend showed Gray Mason's *Musæus*,[123] and so brought the two together. Shortly after, Gray wrote of Mason to Walpole[124]; and, in 1751, asked him to criticize *Elfrida*, and introduced the two to each other.[125] In 1748,[126] and again in

[113] See *Works*, I, 179, n.

[114] The *Wrenn Catalogue* of the University of Texas, makes a number of very dubious attributions to Mason, of pamphlets from this period. See Bibl. B, *sub* Wrenn.

[115] *Quart. Rev.*, XV, 376. The *Quarterly* is not altogether to be relied upon for its testimony. We have Mason's own word that he was a "pupil" of Powell's; and that he knew both Powell and Balguy at Cambridge. Mason, *Memoirs of Whitehead*, in Whitehead, *Poems*, III, 29-30.

[116] Kilvert, *Hurd*, 246-247; Nichols, *Lit. Anecd.*, I, 566 *et seq.*; and Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 63, n. 2.

[117] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 309, n. 2.

[118] *Quart. Rev.*, XV, 376. William Heberden (1710-1801), eminent physician, and contributor to medical science. See *D.N.B.*

[119] *Works*, I, 104.

[120] A distinguished physician whose "collection of books, of manuscripts, and of statuary, coins, gems, and drawings, was the largest formed in his time." *D.N.B.*, *sub* Mead. See also A. L. Read, *Johnsonian Gleanings*, London, 1909, 28; J. B. Nichols, *Lit. Anecd.*, VI, 218; *N. and Q.*, 2d Ser., XI, 443.

[121] Nichols, *Illust.*, II, 146.

[122] Warburton *Letters*, 1809, 71, 83.

[123] *Correspondence of Gray, etc.*, Toynbee ed., II, 94-95; Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 187, n. Mason says that Gray "revised" *Musæus*, with the inference that the revision took place in 1747. In that case, Gray must have been revising it for the second time in 1760. Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 139-140.

[124] *Ibid.*, I, 187.

[125] *Ibid.*, I, 209-210.

[126] *Ibid.*, I, 178.

1749,[127] Gray wrote of Mason at length to Warton; and, not long after the publication of *Isis*, there seems to have commenced an acquaintance between the two.[128]

Such were Mason's scholarly friends within a few years after his commencing A.B. We have some hint of a more purely social circle of acquaintances. In a letter to Walpole, dated March 20, 1773, Mason tells us apropos of Sir John Dalrymple[129]: "Five or six and twenty years ago, I was acquainted with him at college, travelled with him down into Yorkshire, lodged him and his Cambridge hack two or three days at my father's at Hull, and in return for my civilities, a year or two after, he sent his brother-in-law to visit me at Pembroke Hall, which said brother was a declared rebel, hight Wully Hamilton, who writ *The Tears of Scotland*, 1745, and it was next to no miracle that Bishop Keene (with whom I was then very ill on account of his regulations) did not take us both into custody." [130] "Wully" Hamilton is probably William Hamilton of Bangour who in 1749 made his peace with Whiggish Hanoverianism, and agreed, on his part, to forget the Stuarts, if the government, on its part, would forget his opinions on the occasion of Culloden. Thereupon, he returned from France, and apparently travelled northward, probably paying *en route* the visit to Cambridge that Mason mentions. He wrote a considerable amount of poetry, some of it—before the reconciliation of 1749—of a distinctly Jacobite cast.[131] These visits of Dalrymple and Hamilton suggest that Mason must have maintained a certain pomp and circumstance at Cambridge, and that he moved in good society.

The foregoing quotation, however, is also of interest for its reference to Keene's "regulations," and the effort in 1749 to reform the university. On the first of July, 1749, with much ado, His Grace the Duke of Newcastle was installed Chancellor in the place of Somerset. The function is described with tiresome

[127] *Ibid.*, I, 202.

[128] Gilfillan is certainly wrong in dating their acquaintance from the publication of the *Heroic Epistle*, Warton, *Works*, 1854, 145-146.

[129] Probably Sir John Dalrymple (1726-1810), 4th baronet of Cranstoun. He was educated at Edinburgh and at Trinity Hall, Cambridge. See *D.N.B.*

[130] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, I, 63.

[131] Mason seems, however, to have been mistaken in ascribing to him *The Tears of Scotland*. The mistake probably arose from confusion with a piece of that name by Smollett.

propriety by the current *Gentleman's Magazine*,[132] and with indiscreet jocularity in a contemporary letter of Gray's.[133] Mason contributed an *Ode* which the *Gentleman's Magazine* passed over as "a sort of overture," and which Gray thought "the only entertainment that had any tolerable excellence." The installation ceremony was not of very good omen. "Everyone, while it lasted," says Gray, "was very gay, and very busy in the morning, and very owlish and very tipsy at night. I make no exception from the Chancellor to Blue Coat." The Duke did, however, institute a reform. To quell the scholastic anarchy, the new Chancellor, seconded by Dr. Keene,[134] introduced and put into effect on May 11, 1751, eighteen new regulations.[135] These banned all manner of things, from staying out after ten o'clock and wearing bright clothes, to dicing, rioting, and frequenting houses of ill-fame. On November 17 following, the Westminster Club held at the Tuns Tavern its annual celebration of Queen Elizabeth's Day; and Gray's friend Brown, who was proctor at the time, paid an official visit to the Tuns at eleven, an hour after the legal time for all undergraduates to be tucked up in bed. He found Thomas Francklyn, the translator of Sophocles and Regius Professor of Greek, in the chair, and the members, fellows, commoners, and all the rest, still uproarious, although about to break up. The presence of the undergraduates was illegal; and Brown made some tactless remarks to which Francklyn made like reply.[136] The result was rioting, polemics, and lampoons, and the final bringing to trial of the learned professor. Wordsworth[137] seems to think that Mason joined with Balguy and Allen in composing an anonymous tract, *The Academic, or a Disputation on the Propriety of the Late Regulations and the State of the University*.[138] He may or may not have done so; but, at any rate, according to his own statement, he was not on good terms with Dr. Keene "on account of his

[132] *Gent. Mag.*, XIX, 328.

[133] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 201.

[134] According to *D.N.B.*, *sub* Gray, Dr. Keene was Master of Peterhouse, Gray's old college, from 1748 to 1756. In the 1770's, Keene, then Bishop of Ely, was no friend of Mason's. See J. Nichols, *Illust.*, VIII, 635.

[135] See C. H. Cooper, *Annals of Cambridge*, and *Excerpta è Statutis*, 278-286, and C. Wordsworth, *English Universities*, 65 *et seq.*

[136] Wordsworth, *op. cit.*, 71-72.

[137] *Ibid.*

[138] *The Mon. Rev.*, IV, 37-38, considered it all a tempest in a teapot. *Remarks on the Academic* followed, *Mon. Rev.*, IV, 302; V, 317.

regulations." [139] The net outcome of the affair seems to have been even further confusion[140]; and Gray, with sly understatement, wrote to Warton: "Keene's *Implications* have ended queerly."[141]

In 1746, Mason had commenced B.A. at St. John's.[142] The Cambridge records show that he "was elected a fellow of Pembroke Hall in the autumn of 1747," [143] probably through the influence of Gray. *The Quarterly Review* says it was on the recommendation of Dr. Heberden. Gray's letters of the period suggest the very natural solution that a number of Mason's friends helped to bring it about — among others, Brown. Dr. Long, however, who was master, disputed Mason's election. The *Gentleman's Magazine*, some years after, published a letter by Mason in which he explained the difficulty:

> . . . I have had the honor, since I came here last, to be elected by the Fellows of Pembroke into their society; but the Master, who has the power of a negative, has made use of it on this occasion, because he will not have an *extraneus* when they have fit persons in their own college. The Fellows say they have power from their statutes *indifferenter eligere ex utraque academia*, and are going to try it with him at common law, or else get the king to appoint a visitor. If this turns out well, it will be a very lucky thing for me, and much better than a Platt, which I came hither with an intention to sit for, for they are reckoned the best fellowships in the university.[144]

After eighteen months' litigation, Mason came into his fellowship in February, 1749[145]; and during the same year, he received his M.A. as of Pembroke Hall.[146] Gray's peroration to the whole affair is worth quoting:

> The Peace of Pembroke is signed between the high and mighty Prince Roger, surnamed the Long . . . on the one part; and the most noble James Brown, the most serene Theophilus Peele and the most profound Nehemiah May etc. on the other. In short without further prelimi-

[139] Gray also disliked Keene and his regulations. Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 208 etc.

[140] Wordsworth, *English Universities*, 616-634.

[141] April 25, 1749, according to the Tovey ed., I, 196-197.

[142] Scott, *Admissions*, III, 530. Scott gives it 1745/6.

[143] *Ibid.*, and Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., II, 411.

[144] *Gent. Mag.*, LXVI, 452; LXXI, 683.

[145] Scott, *Admissions*, III, 530.

[146] *Graduati Cantabrigiensis, sub* Mason. Mason says it was in July. Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., II, 411.

naries, Knowles, Mason, and Tuthill are elected. . . . The negotiations that preceded this wonderful event are inexplicable. The success of the affair was extremely uncertain but the very night before it, and had come to nothing. . . . They [Peele and May] were desirous of electing two, as the Master proposed, Knowles and Mason, or Mason and Gaskarth, for they were sure he would never admit Tuthill.[147]

Brown, however, remained "steadfast," and even demanded that a visitor be appointed; so finally Long gave in, and the three received their fellowships.

Both Gray and Mason seem to have had the good of Pembroke very much at heart. The former, in a letter to Warton, regretfully noted the falling off of registration[148]; and Tovey writes: "I believe that the name and presence of Gray, and even the reputation and more busy influence of Mason, gave prestige to the college, and helped to revive the drooping fortunes of that 'domus antiqua et religiosa,' as Queen Elizabeth called it."[149] Their growing influence divided the "learned world at Cambridge,"[150] as Nichols calls it, into two camps, "the polite scholars and the philologists. The former, at the head of which were Gray and Mason, superciliously confined all merit to their own circle, and looked down with fastidious contempt on the rest of the world." Just what was meant by "polite scholar," I do not know; but apparently the college realized a difference between the Gray circle and the general average of the fellows. Perhaps on account of petty jealousy or perhaps because of his attitude toward Keene's regulations, Mason received no further manna from that learned source. Green's *Cam*[151] suggests that Mason was not in favor with the powers that were; and an anonymous *Letter to the University of Cambridge*[152] charged the Chancellor-Duke with "prudently overlooking" Taylor,[153] Hurd, Gray, and Mason. The last three, at any rate, received ultimate preferment through other interest, and Mason early obtained the tutorship of Lord John Cavendish, fourth son of William, the third Duke of Devonshire, a pupil whose later career reflected considerable credit on his

[147] April 25, 1749. Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 196.
[148] *Ibid.*
[149] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 49, n.
[150] Nichols, *Lit. Anecd.*, V, 613.
[151] See Bibl. B.
[152] See Bibl. B.
[153] The noted Greek scholar. See Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 287, n.

teacher. This connection [154] ripened into the substantial fruit of a chaplaincy to the king.

The subject of Mason's character is always a difficult matter to touch upon; for the scholarship of the last thirty years has pursued him with unrelenting scorn and ridicule[155]; but, at this period of his life, at any rate, I see no reason for holding an ill opinion of him. If we may trust Gray's judgment, his morals were good[156]; and, if contemporary evidence is to be accepted, he employed his time wisely in studying literature and the arts. Perhaps he was a dilettante and a sentimentalist: one can hardly expect much depth in a young man of twenty. For the rest, Gray gives a fair summary. On June 5, 1748, he wrote of Mason: "He has much fancy, little judgement, and a good deal of modesty. I take him for a good and well-meaning creature; but then he is really in simplicity a child, and loves everybody he meets with; he reads little or nothing, writes abundance, and that with a design to make his fortune by it." [157] Warburton, too, vouches for his modesty[158]; and, although Tovey cites the following anecdote to prove the opposite,[159] I am inclined to accept Warburton's testimony and Gray's:

> Several years after he [Mason] had written his Elegy [*Isis*], he was coming into Oxford on horseback; and, as he passed over Magdalen Bridge, (it was then evening) he turned to his friend [Warton], and expressed his satisfaction, that, as it was getting dusk, they should enter the place unnoticed. His friend did not seem aware of the advantage. "What!" rejoined the Poet, "do not you remember my *Isis*?" [160]

As to Mason's "writing to make a fortune by it," a charge that Gray commonly made against him, Mason's own note on the matter seems a convincing explanation: "Men of the world will not blame me for writing from so prudent a motive as that of making my fortune by it; and yet the truth, I believe, at the time was, that I was perfectly satisfied if my publications furnished me with a

[154] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 264.

[155] *Ibid.*, III, xii-xiv, and examples cited in Chapter I, The Vogue of Mason.

[156] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 277.

[157] Mason, *Gray*, prefixed to Gray, *Poems*, York, 1775, 190; see also Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 178.

[158] Warburton *Letters*, London, 1809, 87.

[159] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, xvi.

[160] Mant, *Memoirs*, in T. Warton, *Works*, I, xxii. I think Mason had some ground for concern in view of the political and academic conditions of the day.

few guineas to see a play or an opera." [161] As a matter of fact, Gray seems somewhat to have shared Congreve's point of view when the latter disgusted Voltaire by insisting that he was not an author but a private gentleman[162]; and, because of this bias, Gray condemned Mason roundly for being "avaricious." Upon this head, Mason wrote to Walpole shortly after Gray's death: "I never saw anything myself beneath the dignity of a gentleman in making a profit of the productions of one's own brain. I frequently had disputes with him [Gray] on this matter which generally ended in a laugh; he called me covetous; and I called him proud." [163] As for Gray's other strictures, they are what one would expect from a retiring scholar of middle age upon a youth of twenty-three.

On August 8, 1749, Gray gave a second characterization, which, in my judgment, comes to the same thing: "He is very ingenious with great good nature and simplicity; a little vain, but in so harmless and comical a way, that it does not offend one at all; a little ambitious, but withal so ignorant of the world and its ways that this does not hurt him in one's opinions; so sincere and so undisguised that no mind with a spark of generosity would ever think of hurting him, he lies so open to injury; but so indolent that if he cannot overcome this habit, all his good qualities will signify nothing at all." [164] Comments must be taken whence they come; and it is no matter for surprise that Gray, who annotated his beloved Linnæus even during meal-time, should have considered any young man just out of college both ignorant and lazy. Mason's lying "open to injury" appears again a few years after, when Gray urged Walpole to temper his criticisms of *Elfrida*, because Mason was a "tender parent." [165] A synthesis of the evidence reveals Mason an æsthetic youth eager for the companionship of those whose interests were like his own. His life was easy, his future

[161] Mason, *Gray*, 190, n.

[162] *London Mag.*, Mar., 1772, 140.

[163] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, I, 15.

[164] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 202. Hartley Coleridge interprets both these estimates by Gray as follows: "To have more fancy than judgment, to be very modest and a little (which means not a little) vain are qualities common to every young man that is, or is to be, or sincerely wishes to be, a poet: and a stripling, who came to college direct from his father's parsonage, might well be ignorant of the world." See *Northern Worthies*, III, 253, or *Worthies of Yorkshire*, 299.

[165] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 210.

seemed assured; but he was not without a worthy ambition for literary distinction. Gray says that indolence was his besetting sin — if we may judge from his latter life, his indolence was spiritual and perhaps intellectual — certainly not an indifference to everyday affairs. Mason's life was very busy; but one feels that he had no vision and that he failed to think things out: he never grew beyond the sentimentalist and the dilettante. Perhaps his difficulty was a failure to grasp the realities of life from actual experience: this may chiefly account for his arrested spiritual development.

Mason's early relations with Gray were doubtless like those of Gray and Nicholls, "an intimacy, part brotherly, part filial and paternal." [166] But, by 1753, when the Mason-Gray correspondence began, the two men were evidently on terms of great intimacy and almost of equality. In September, Gray visited Warton at Durham, and wrote back, asking Mason to do him several small favors, forward his letters, inquire after his trunk, and take his watch into safe-keeping.[167] A few days later, he had occasion to write again sympathizing with Mason over the death of his father and the loss of his inheritance: "I do not attempt to console you on the situation your fortune is left in," he says; "if it were far worse, the good opinion I have of you tells me you will never the sooner do anything mean or unworthy of yourself." [168] He told Warton that Mason was meeting his difficulties "like a Hero"[169]; and, the next month, he asked Mason to "look up lodgings for him in Jermyn Street." [170]

Their literary relations also, were intimate. The general attitude, either expressed or implied, of critics, has been that Mason, both as poet and as scholar, was the merest hanger-on of Gray. This attitude developed as early as 1777,[171] but did not become general until rather recently. Stephen says: "Gray's most enthusiastic disciple, Mason, had come under his influence at Cambridge." [172] Phelps speaks in the same strain: "It is rather difficult to classify the poet William Mason (1725-1797) except to

[166] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, xi. The expression is Tovey's.
[167] *Ibid.*, I, 236.
[168] *Ibid.*, I, 240.
[169] *Ibid.*, I, 241.
[170] *Ibid.*, I, 246.
[171] *Monthly Rev.*, LVII, 136-142.
[172] Stephen, *Hours in a Library*, III, 108.

say that he was first, last, and all the time an imitator." [173] Beers has the same attitude: "Mason . . . was a very small poet and a somewhat absurd person. He aped, first Milton and afterwards Gray, so closely that his work often seems like parody." [174] Tovey even charges him with "plagiarizing" from Gray.[175] Undoubtedly, Mason was influenced by Gray, as well as by Milton, Thomson, Spenser, and others; but much of his work was under the influence of neither Milton nor Gray, the Chambers satires, for example; and the statement that he is an "absurd person" is yet to be justified. Relative chronology shows that in a number of notable instances, the literary influence — if there were any — must have run in the opposite direction.[176] Long before meeting Gray, Mason was imitating Milton and Spenser,[177] and trying his hand at Chaucereontics. He composed his first Pindaric ode at about the time of their meeting,[178] years before *The Progress of Poesy* or *The Bard* were first mentioned in Gray's correspondence. *Elfrida*, seemingly, was nearly, if not quite, finished before Gray ever saw it[179]; and it is hardly likely that Gray was the original begetter of its Greek dramaturgy, its Anglo-Saxon subject-matter, or its Pindaric choruses[180]; and Gray's criticisms of *Caractacus*, although numerous, are very minute. Gray probably supplied no more to Mason's works than to Walpole's *Anecdotes of Painting*[181]; and he, in turn, submitted *The Bard* to Mason[182]; and,

[173] Phelps, *Eng. Rom. Movement*, 97.

[174] Beers, *Eng. Romanticism in the 18th Century*, 151.

[175] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 314-315, n.

[176] Chronology tempts one to say that Mason influenced Gray to use the ode-form and to explore Germanic and Celtic antiquity; but these things were in the air; and one cannot tell what Walpole, Warton, and Gray's own scholarly curiosity may have prompted. The facts of Pindar's technique certainly seem to have been common property. See *Mon. Rev.*, XI, 385 (1754); see also Akenside's *Ode to the Earl of Huntingdon* (1748).

[177] See *Il Bellicoso*, *Il Pacifico*, and *Musæus*.

[178] See *Works*, I, 30.

[179] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 210.

[180] Haller (*Southey*, 80) perpetuates the error that Mason's choruses in *Elfrida* were modeled on Gray's and Collins' Pindarics. Collins' odes are not strictly Pindaric; and *Elfrida* was finished, choruses and all, by the spring of 1751 (Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 210); whereas the first possible reference to the composition of *The Progress of Poesy* is sometime not before 1752, and it apparently was not finished then (Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 219).

[181] See Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 325 *et seq.* Gray also criticized *Elfrida* and some of the *Odes* and *Elegies*.

[182] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 331, 334. He submitted it also to Warton. *Ibid.*, I, 273. It was customary to submit one's work before publication to the advice of friends, and to revise accordingly. E.g., Cowper's *Letters*, III, 385-386.

indeed, Mason has even been credited with settling, by his advice, the quatrain-form in which Gray finally cast the *Elegy*.[183]

In 1750, at the age of twenty-five, Mason was launched upon a promising literary career. He had written at least eleven poems, and published five. *Musæus* and *Isis* had gone through several editions; and his Senate-House *Ode* had been set, and performed before a distinguished company. Dodsley had taken him up as a *protégé*; and Mason had been fortunate in gaining the friendship of some of the most eminent men of the age: Whitehead, Warton, Hurd, Warburton, Gray, and, a little later, Walpole. He had means; he had leisure; he had no bad habits. No wonder Gray had hopes of "something good to come." [184]

Not only in his works, but in the very facts of his biography, Mason is typical of the semi-Romantic poets who characterize the middle and, to some degree, the latter part of the eighteenth century. Like John Philips, Thomson, and Cowper, he was the son of a clergyman, with all that that implies of early environment. His home-life, however, gave him more than a purely clerical strain: he belonged to a family of position and of substance, and so he inherited a birthright of intellectual and artistic, as well as religious, ideals. The eighteenth century saw among the nobility and the lesser gentry, the rise of a culture, admirably fine although on a narrow class-foundation. Mason's years at Cambridge molded his life into a multiform and characteristic strand in this civilizing movement.

[183] Young, John, *A Criticism on the Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, 6-7; cf. 67-68.

[184] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 187.

CHAPTER III

MASON'S YOUNG MANHOOD: 1750-1760

DURING the decade of the 1750's, Mason's life underwent a critical change: his youth, largely sheltered by virtue of the wealth and social position of his father and later by his own academic surroundings, gave place to a manhood which was, at least for a season, a period of trial and uncertainty. The sudden death of his father in 1753, brought about this change. Mason's allowance from home, probably rather generous, at once stopped; and he was obliged to get a livelihood in the one profession that his education had fitted him to enter, the Church. Fortunately, his friends came to his assistance; and, in the course of a few years, he was fairly showered with preferments. His former affluence was thus somewhat restored; but, with his taking orders, a new element had entered his life, an element that turned him largely away from the university and from a scholarly career such as that of Gray or Warton, and forced him, if he would be conscientious, to give most of his time and effort to the innumerable duties of a reverend pluralist. He would not give up his practice of the arts; he never had the power of a great creative artist; and now he had no longer the leisure to become erudite: thus his new clerical functions confirmed rather than diminished his youthful dilettantism; and he remained the dilettante to the end. Meanwhile, his writing continued. In 1752, his reputation was established by the appearance of *Elfrida*; and this success encouraged him to publish the *Odes*, later satirized by Colman and Lloyd, and his Greek-Celtic tragedy *Caractacus*. Matters of personal interest, furthermore, were not wanting: his quarrel and reconciliation with Garrick, his concern to find a future Mrs. Mason, and Whitehead's concern to find one for him, and, most interesting of all, his piquant correspondence with Gray, which gives us vivid glimpses month by month and almost day by day of the manner of life, not only of William Mason but of hundreds of others in his generation, for whom he stands as an example

During the first two or three years of the decade, Mason seems still to have been living at Cambridge, partly on his fellowship and partly, we may suppose, on a liberal allowance from Hull. Through connections at Cambridge and London, he was probably acquiring some gloss of sophistication, and a considerable incentive to further composition. This incentive manifested itself in his writing *Elfrida*, an Anglo-Saxon story dramatized on the Greek model. This, he submitted to Gray's detailed criticism,[1] and later, at Gray's suggestion, to Walpole's comment.[2] The play, its versification, its dramaturgy, its plot, its characters, its Sentimentalism, will receive treatment among the Works of Mason. Suffice it to note here the fact of its publication in March, 1752,[3] introduced by several anonymous letters on structure, addressed by the author seemingly to Gray. As a literary production, *Elfrida* was well received among cultivated people; and, as a drama, its success, when it was produced twenty years later, is surprising, in view of the fact that it was not intended for the stage. The early editions attest a wide sale. According to the *Catalogue of the British Museum*, three came out in 1752; a fourth, in the following year; a fifth, in 1757; another, in 1759; and two more editions, a seventh and an eighth, in 1773. Bell's *British Theatre* (1797) and *British Drama* (1811) include it. The choruses as given at the performance were published in 1772; and, in 1774, an Italian translation came out in Florence.[4] I have also found an edition in the *British Library* (1796); and, in 1785, the Baroness de Vasse included a prose translation of it in her *Traduction du Théâtre Anglois*. Not without reason does Thorndike call *Elfrida* and *Caractacus* "most famous" of the original dramas following the Greek form, in the mid-eighteenth century.[5] This success is especially significant in view of the fact that the subject-matter belongs to an age that was considered "Gothic" and barbarous, and that the form, although not Romantic like the content, was rather far from the model of Voltaire. From now on, Mason's reputation as an author was established.

[1] See Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, Appendix.

[2] *Ibid.*, I, 210.

[3] See Bibl. A, *sub Elfrida.*

[4] For Mason's own comment on this, see Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VI, 118.

[5] Thorndike, *Tragedy*, 297. An account of the production of this play and the contemporary comments upon it appear in Chapter V, and a discussion of its historical significance and popular vogue, in Chapter IX.

At this time, however, Mason's literary career suffered interruption by a series of misfortunes that took him away from Cambridge and ultimately introduced him into ecclesiastical life. In Mason's *Chronology* [6] occurs the following entry: "My father died Aug. 26, 1753." On September 21, Gray wrote to Mason: "the alarm you had on your sister's account served but to prepare you for a greater loss, which was soon to follow." [7] And two days later, Mason answered from Hull: "You have been rightly informed that I have lost a most affectionate father." [8] Hurd noted the event at greater length: "Poor Mason's affliction you have heard of. He lost his father: and since that two servants have died out of the family, and his mother [9] [stepmother] is now ill. All this looks like a contagious fever, which alarms us all exceedingly over him: besides, we fear his situation in other respects is but indifferent. Pray write a word to him, if you have not already. Advise him to come away from Hull or say anything else to him you please. Anything from a friend on these occasions carries comfort with it. . . ." [10]

The death of Mason's father was almost immediately followed by that of Marmaduke Pricket, whom Mason describes as "a young Physician of my own age, with whom I was brought up from infancy, who died of the same infectious fever." [11] On this sad occasion, he wrote to Gray: "In my long illness at London [when?], he attended me with a care and assiduity almost unparalleled. I endeavored to repay that care in my turn, but, alas, his fate did not give me time to repay half the debt, yet what I could, I did. . . ." [12] Pricket willed Mason a legacy of two hundred pounds, not a large sum as Mason counted money, but very useful at that moment, for he had no income from his father's estate.

He explained the whole matter in a letter to Gray: ". . . In a will made five years ago his [Pricket's] friendship bequeathed to me two hundred pounds, which, when my debt is discharged to his executor, will be reduced to one; yet the sum will come at

[6] See Appendix A.

[7] Gray-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., 16-17.

[8] *Ibid.*, 18.

[9] Lowell in *Latest Lit. Essays*, 28, says Mason's "mother" died in March, 1753. His *mother* died in 1725; his stepmother was ill in September, 1753, but recovered. See Appendix C.

[10] Kilvert, *Hurd*, 50: Sept. 27, 1753.

[11] Mason, *Gray*, York, 1778, III, 151, n.

[12] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 237.

present as opportunely as anything of the kind possibly could, as my father, by the strangest disposition of his affairs that can possibly be conceived, has left all my paternal estate to my mother-in-law [step-mother] [13] for her life and entailed it so on my little sister [14] that I can take up no money upon it; so that without this legacy, I should not have a shilling at present." [15] The estate seems to have been entailed on the issue of the elder Mason; but he gave his wife a life-interest in it. Mason's coming into possession was seemingly contingent upon his surviving his step-mother and his sister, a circumstance which made it impossible for him to raise money on his interest.[16] Gray was "both surprised and angry" at the Vicar's "weakness," and declared: "there must have been a great fault somewhere, probably in the person [Mason's step-mother?] who took advantage of his [the Vicar's] weakness, upon whom your care and kindness is very ill bestowed, though you do not at present show any resentment, nor perhaps ever will." [17] It is, however, a very real tribute to the Vicar's character that Gray cannot help calling him "a good and friendly man, whose memory I honor." [18]

In the autumn of 1753, in short, Mason found himself reduced from being son and heir of an opulent clergyman, to having his college fellowship, a mere hundred pounds, his natural and acquired gifts, and a very uncertain future. As Gray sums up the *ménage*: "There is nobody but you and Tom and the curled dog." [19] Tom was apparently Mason's valet; and Mason considered the advisability of letting him go, but felt that he could not "easily relinquish the pomp of travelling with a servant all of a sudden." [20] Apparently, he did not forego this "pomp," for Tom reappears from time to time; and, in the '60's, Benjamin seems to take his place.[21]

[13] Cowper also uses mother-in-law for step-mother, *Letters*, ed. 1904, III, 242. Terms of relationship in the eighteenth century seem to have differed somewhat from present usage.

[14] Mason's half-sister, daughter of his step-mother, the Vicar's third wife. See Appendix C.

[15] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 238. Mason had also his Pembroke fellowship.

[16] His step-mother died in 1776 (See Appendix C). If he came into the estate at all, it must have been at that time; but as I find no record in his *Chronology* or elsewhere of such an inheritance, I judge it to have gone to his sister.

[17] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 239.

[18] *Ibid.*, I, 240.

[19] *Ibid.*, I, 247.

[20] *Ibid.*, I, 238.

[21] *Ibid.*, III, 143.

From Hurd's letter, already quoted, one gathers that Mason was at home in Hull at the time of his father's death; about a month later, he wrote to Gray that he should "be obliged to take a journey to Mr. Hutton's near Richmond," [22] in the North Riding of Yorkshire. This is the Mr. Hutton that was the brother of His Grace of York (translated in '57 to Canterbury) and husband of Mason's cousin.[23]

Hutton, when he learned how Mason had been left, seems to have summoned him to Marske and made a will in his favor.[24] In November, 1753, Gray was "heartily glad to hear Mr. Hutton was so reasonable"; and he advised Mason to make his "bargain with all the circumspection and selfishness of an old hunks." [25] Gray seemed to think that his young protégé needed the advice; and he was probably right. Mason, indeed, a few months before his father's death, was trying to get a friend an official position; and it transpired that Mason was not, at that time at least, very worldly-wise in obtaining what the eighteenth century, by a decorous periphrasis, was pleased to call "preferment." [26] At all events, the Hutton "bargain," whatever it was, does not seem to have resulted in more than the reversion of an estate; and, after all, Mason, in his immediate circumstances, was no better off.

One is not surprised, at least from a worldly point of view — and that was the typical point of view of the eighteenth century — to find Mason hurrying at once into the one profession for which he was at all qualified, the priesthood. The acceptance of so practical and so conventional a solution suggests that Mason was more Neo-classical in ordering his life than the sentimental *Elfrida* would imply. It is not just to infer, however, that Mason considered his new profession purely a means of gaining daily bread; but, on the other hand, he would probably not have gone

[22] Gray-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., 19.

[23] See Appendix C. Mason seems to have come into this estate at Hutton's death, in 1768. See Appendix A.

[24] Gray-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., 24.

[25] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 245.

[26] Of this former affair, Hurd writes to Balguy: "Poor Mason is a wretched politician. He has taken it into his head to serve a friend, but has contrived such a way of doing it as, if the world knew it, would disgrace the very name of poetry. He wrote me a long letter about getting a Commissioner's place of Bankrupts from my Lord Chancellor, which he supposes may be done by a *friend's* asking for it. I referred him, as my Lord Archbishop of York would have done, to parliamentary interest. When will these simple-minded men of Parnassus learn a little prudence?" Kilvert, *Hurd*, 50.

into the Church had circumstances not exerted pressure. In the eighteenth century, the Church was almost the only resource for the man of culture in straitened circumstances; and, in seeking its fold, Mason was only following an established custom.

He passed the early spring with Walpole, returned to Cambridge by April 11,[27] and took orders in the fall. He was ordained Deacon November 17, and Priest November 24, 1754, by the Bishop of Chester, in St. Margaret's Church, Westminster.[28] He seems to have spent part of the fall in Chiswick or London,[29] and sometime in December to have gone to Cambridge; for, the day after Christmas, Gray wrote that he was "still" there: ". . . we are all mighty glad he is in Orders and no better than any of us."[30] Mason's *Chronology* bears out the fact of his ordination in November, 1754. Garrick celebrated the occasion with complimentary verses, later published in *The New Foundling Hospital for Wit*.[31] Warburton felt that Mason, since he had taken orders, ought to renounce the world, the flesh, and literature, to give his whole time to clerical duties[32] — Warburton, the episcopal commentator on Pope and Shakespeare! Mason, at the time, gave assent to this high counsel; and he was careful — as pastoral care went in that day — to fulfill his churchly obligations; but not even the Jovian Warburton could long keep a pen out of his hand. In short, he was duly priested; and it only remained to secure a living.

This was not long in the doing; and he was instituted Rector of Aston, Yorks., November 27, 1754, on the presentation of the Earl of Holdernesse.[33] In November, 1754, *The London Magazine* notes Mason's institution.[34] The *Gentleman's* for the following April contains an address by Garrick *To the Right Honorable Earl of H-d-rss on the Preferment of the Celebrated Mr. M-son*.[35] Aston is a small village about eight and a half miles

[27] *Correspondence of Gray, etc.*, Toynbee ed., II, 148.

[28] Scott, *Admissions*, III, 530.

[29] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 250.

[30] *Ibid.*, I, 258.

[31] *Op. cit.*, II, 156.

[32] Nichols, *Lit. Anecd.*, II, 239.

[33] Scott, *Admissions*, III, 530. In his *Chronology* (Appendix A), Mason says he was instituted at Aston in 1759. He seems to have confused the date of his institution with that of the resignation of his Pembroke fellowship.

[34] *London Mag.*, XXIII, 524.

[35] *Gent. Mag.*, XXV, 179; signed D. G-r-ck. The following October (XXV, 477), by a curious misprint, the *Gent. Mag.* declares "Mr. Watson" to have been presented with Aston, Yorks.

from Sheffield. The *Monthly* refers to the living as an "independency," [36] but Allen rates it at only £12 15s 2½d.[37] The church building consists of a nave and aisles with chancel and tower at the west end and the interior has several handsome monuments. The right of presentation went with the manor until the 1770's when Lord Holdernesse sold the estate to Mr. Verelst, and the right was vested in the Duke of Leeds. Mason succeeded one Hugh Warrender.[38]

Perhaps the proximity of the manor had created the custom that the rector should, at the same time, be chaplain to its lord. Mason, at all events, held both positions in conjunction. Many years later, in 1792, he wrote Lord Harcourt: "I remember, when first I went from Cambridge into Lord Holdernesse's family, Gray, who went up to Town in the same stage-coach, told people in London 'that he was come to put Mason an apprentice to a Secretary of State.' " [39] Perhaps, Gray thought Mason was still in need of worldly wisdom. About the same time, according to Kilvert, Hurd composed *A Sonnet Addressed to Mr. Mason on his Leaving College and Going into the Family of Lord Holdernesse.* If having every important event in one's life commemorated by complimentary verses, be a test of celebrity, Mason was certainly celebrated — after the fashion of his age.

Was it for this insidious Friendship strove
To clasp our bosoms in its silken snare,
For this, thy virtues bloom'd so wonderous fair,
And Fame for thee th' unfading chaplet wove?
Say will yon linnet from her spray remove,
Where sportive she, and free from every care
Warbles at will her softly soothing air,
And for the glittering cage desert the grove?
Then may'st thou, sweetest of the tuneful quire,
Thy gentle muse, thy loved and loving friend,
The golden competence, the vacant hour,
Celestial blessings, barter for the hire
Of witlings base, and thy free soul descend
To toil for unbless'd gold, and flatter power.
R. H. 3 Jan. 1756.[40]

[36] *Mon. Rev.*, XIV, 439, Apr., 1756.

[37] Allen, V, 232. Equal to three to four times as much now. See A. Aupetit, *Essai général*, Paris, 1901, 250 *et seq.*

[38] Hunter, *Doncaster*, II, 166. Hunter is usually accurate in ecclesiastical matters.

[39] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 191.

[40] Kilvert, *Hurd*, 62.

The contrast of the sense of this sonnet with Hurd's letter to Balguy—"When will these simple-minded men of Parnassus learn a little prudence?"—shows how conventional and at times unreal were many of the sentiments that went into the making of what passed in the eighteenth century as poetry. The reference to Lord Holdernesse as a "witling base," although hardly flattering to a patron whose advent had saved the day financially for Mason, has, however, somewhat of actual truth in it. Walpole sums up the man in a caustic epigram: "Lord Holdernesse was born to an earldom, but having little fortune or parts, had been promoted by the Duke of Newcastle to great posts." [41] The *Dictionary of National Biography* calls him "mediocre"; and, in later years, Mason does not seem to have had much respect for him.

Hurd's sonnet was afterwards altered into the following, says Kilvert, "corrected by Mr. Mason himself":

A gentle linnet, débonnaire and gay,
Whilom had roved the wood in careless vein,
Perch'd where it pleased, and with its honied strain
Had waked the morn and closed the eye of day.
A fowler heard, and o'er her custom'd spray
Inwove of liméd twigs a tangled train,
And with her favorite food bestrew'd the plain:
The wiry cage unseen at distance lay.
Blythe and unweeting to the charméd tree,
The songster comes, and claps his little wing,
Then downward bends to pick the golden fare.
Will no kind hand the struggling captive free?
He yields to fate. He droops; forgets to sing,
And greets his lord with no sweet-warbled air! [42]

Walpole, writing to Bentley of Holdernesse's resignation from the Secretaryship of State, incidentally summed up the whole situation in his usual caustic style: ". . . I cannot help feeling most for poor Lord Holdernesse who sees a scheme of glory dashed which would have added new lustre to the British annals, and have transmitted the name D'Arcy [the family name of Holdernesse] down to latest posterity. He had but just taken Mr. Mason, the poet, into his house *to write his deserts*; and he had just reason to

[41] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., III, 82. See numerous spirited references to him and his Countess in Walpole, *Last Journals*.

[42] Kilvert, *Hurd*, 62-63.

expect that the secretary's office would have gained a superiority over that of France and Italy, which was unknown even to Walsingham."[43] Whether or not My Lord's purpose in making Mason his chaplain was to insure a history of his own fame, is uncertain; but Mason assuredly never wrote anything of the sort.

On the first of March, 1755, Mason tried, through Holdernesse's influence, to be made chaplain to Lord Hertford's embassy to Germany[44]; and, finally, by the latter part of June, he is dating his letters from Hanover. "Germany," he writes, "is the reservoir of solid literature and therefore not unworthy of attention. . . ."[45] This is a very interesting statement half a century before Madame de Staël wrote *De l'Allemagne*, and serves to remind us that such authors as Toland and Bishop Nichols had done much to discover German scholarship to eighteenth-century England. Mason seems to have made some effort to introduce his friend's *Elegy* among Germans that he met, but without any apparent success. In the same letter, he speaks of having "bought at Hamburg such a pianoforte, and so cheap!"[46] This seems to be the famous "Zumpe" piano which the *Encyclopædia Britannica* of a century ago said he invented. Mason may be credited with understanding the superiority of the new instrument and introducing it into England, but hardly with more than that.

Dobson implies that Mason first met Whitehead in Germany.[47] It is more probable that Mason had known him at Cambridge.[48] Whitehead was travelling as tutor to Viscount Villiers, son of the Earl of Jersey, and to Lord Nuneham, son of the Earl of Harcourt. In writing to the latter the year following, Whitehead remarks: "I saw much less of Mason in my travels than I wished to have done, tho' I saw him several times."[49] If he saw Whitehead, he must also have seen, perhaps met for the first time, young Lord Nuneham whose correspondence with Mason was to form one of the most agreeable incidents of the poet's later life. Indeed, only a few years later, he signalizes a visit to Nuneham with the following epistle, composed in transit:

[43] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., II, 371.
[44] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 260; Gray-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., 27-28.
[45] *Ibid.*, 30.
[46] *Ibid.*, 33.
[47] *Nat. Rev.*, LIX, 287.
[48] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 256.
[49] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 214.

Mr. Mason to Lord Nuneham

To Oxford fam'd for Ale & Greek,
Mason is come all fat & sleek
Ready to drive in half-an-hour
To meet his friends at Nuneham bower.
But lest the Laureat & the Lord
Have choosen both to break their word,
(For Lords and Bards are sorts of things
He trusts no more in than in K-gs),
Therefore he means to stay & stare
At all that Oxford fancys rare,
And wait an answer to this lay,
Before he takes a fresh Postchay.
Cross Inn, 5 o'clock.[50]

Mason left Germany in mid-summer; and Gray was expecting him early in August.[51] In due course, he landed, and was soon casting about for fresh employment. By November 26, he was at Wadsworth,[52] apparently with his cousins. He thought of going to Ireland with the Lord Lieutenant[53]; and, on the twenty-sixth of November, he wrote to Gray: "I have not philosophy, or a better thing, economy, to make what I have a competency." [54] The trip to Ireland seems never to have taken place; but, in December of the next year, Archbishop Hutton gave him the Prebend of Holme in the Cathedral of York. Le Neve lists under Holme: "William Mason, 6th Dec. 1756, on death of Thomas Clarke." [55] Mason resigned in 1762, and was succeeded on the first of March by Henry Egerton.[56]

Mason probably still had an eye to further preferment; and the second of July following (1757), the Duke of Devonshire, father of his one-time pupil, Sir John Cavendish, secured his appointment as Chaplain in ordinary to George II.[57] Gray in June writes Mason anticipatory congratulations,[58] and a little later admonishes him: "You are welcome to the land of the living, to the sunshine

[50] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 7. The reference to Oxford ale, may be a glance at Thomas Warton's *Panegyric on Oxford Ale* (1750).
[51] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 268.
[52] *Ibid.*, I, 281.
[53] Gray-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., 37.
[54] *Ibid.*, 39.
[55] Le Neve, *Fasti Ecclesiæ*, III, 194.
[56] *Ibid.*
[57] Scott, *Admissions*, III, 530.
[58] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 337.

of a court, to the dirt of a chaplain's table, to the society of Dr. Squire and Dr. Chapman. Have you set out, as Dr. Cobden ended, with a sermon against adultery? or do you, with deep mortification and a Christian sense of your own nothingness, read prayers to Princess Emily while she is putting on her dress? Pray acquaint me with the whole ceremonial, and how your first preachment succeeded; whether you have heard of anybody that renounced their election, or made restitution to the Exchequer; whether you saw any woman trample her pompons underfoot, or spit upon her handkerchief to wipe off the rouge." [59]

In 1748 and 1749, Gray's friend Brown had stood out against Long, and insisted that Mason receive his Pembroke fellowship. In 1756, Mason paid this academic debt by helping Brown to the Mastership of Pembroke — assistance that seems to have been somewhat opposed to Mason's own interests.[60] During the spring and summer of the same year, he was at Tunbridge, doubtless feeling very poor, for Hutton had not yet given him the Prebend of Holme. Gray — perhaps with an eye to economy — suggests that the two go to Switzerland, hire a house, and live there together [61] — a very real compliment in view of the unfortunate *finale* of the trip with Walpole.

In October, 1757, Lord John Cavendish commissioned Mason to write Gray and ask him to accept the laureateship as a sinecure.[62] Gray declined,[63] and Whitehead was ultimately chosen, but not without a sort of apology [64] to Mason. In his *Memoirs of Whitehead*, Mason gives an account of the matter:

> Let me then be permitted, from a personal motive of gratitude to the memory of the late Duke of Devonshire, here to add, that I was not myself overlooked on the occasion; so far from it, that a previous apology was made to me by Lord Cavendish, couched in these or very similar terms, "that being in orders, I was thought, merely on that account, less eligible for the office than a layman." A reason so politely put, I was

[59] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 348 and note.

[60] *Correspondence of Gray, etc.*, Toynbee ed., II, 158 *et seq.*

[61] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 300, 302.

[62] Gray-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., 112, 113, 114; also Mason, *Memoirs of Whitehead*, in Whitehead, *Poems*, III, 88.

[63] See Mason's account, *Memoirs of Gray*, in Gray's *Poems*, 1775, 258-259.

[64] Walpole said the place was actually offered to Mason. Walpole, *Memoirs of George the Second*, III, 82.

glad to hear assigned; and if I thought it a weak one, they who know me, will readily believe that I am the last man in the world who would have attempted to controvert it.[65]

Not even Warburton's monitions could keep Mason from writing. Inspired perhaps by the success of the odes in *Elfrida*, he gave to the world in 1756 a thin volume of additional *Odes*.[66] It includes *To Memory*, *To Independency*, *On Melancholy*, and *On the Fate of Tyranny* (taken from Isaiah, xiv). Shenstone and Smollett had already treated of the first two themes. When the *Odes* were about to come out, Gray wrote Warton[67]: ". . . We do not expect that the world, which is just going to be *invaded*, will bestow much attention on them. If you hear anything, you will tell us." From a subsequent letter[68] of Gray's to Mason, we gather that Gray thought the reception favorable; and the *Critical* took occasion to class Mason with Young, Armstrong, Akenside, Gray, Warton, and Whitehead, as one of the great poets of the age.[69]

Four years later, however, Colman and Lloyd grouped together Gray's *Bard* and Mason's *Ode to Memory*, and satirized them respectively in two parodies addressed to Obscurity and Oblivion.[70] The *Ode to Oblivion* has some rather good fun in it; and Mason is justly ridiculed for over-working alliteration and for his diffuse pastoral style. Warburton noted that "Somebody had abused Mason and Gray in two miserable buffon odes."[71] Dr. Grainger, on the other hand, wrote Percy, later compiler of the *Reliques*, that he hoped the satires would "produce a proper change in the further compositions of Mason and Gray." He always felt them too "obscure" and thought Pindar "a bad model."[72] The *Gentleman's* published an extensive quotation from the *Ode to Obscu-*

[65] Whitehead, *Poems*, III, 87.

[66] Published March 15, 1756; Straus, *Dodsley*, 359.

[67] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 295, March 24, 1756.

[68] *Ibid.*, I, 301-302.

[69] *Crit. Rev.*, I, 276. In general, I am leaving the reviews and influence of Mason's poems to be discussed in the appropriate chapter on his Works.

[70] Advertised in *Gent. Mag.*, July, 1760, XXX, 339. Tooke (Churchill's *Poet. Works*, Boston, 1854, I, 53, n.) attributed *Obscurity* to Colman and *Oblivion* to Lloyd. They seem, in fact, both to have been composed in concert. See a note, apparently from Lloyd's MS., Lloyd's *Works*, 1774, 120. Dobson's discussion of the affair is pleasing, *Nat. Rev.*, LVI, 635.

[71] Warburton, *Letters*, 305. See also *Gray*, Aldine ed., cxli. *Letters*.

[72] Nichols, *Lit. Anecd.*, VII, 275.

rity.[73] The *Monthly* printed a seven-page review, and declared that the satires were "executed with considerable spirit, tho' intended with little candour." [74] Gray wrote to Mason: "He [Colman] makes very tolerable fun of me, where I understand him which is not everywhere, [*sic!*] but seems more angry with you." [75] Gray adds that Colman had written the thing up in Lloyd's *Evening Post* "to tell people what he meant, and [Colman] says it is like to produce a great combustion in the literary world; so, if you have any mind to *combustle* about it, well and good; for me, I am neither so literary nor so combustible." Mason, like Gray, remained silent.

Shortly after, Churchill also attacked Mason in the *Rosciad* (1761):

> Now should I sing in some poetic line,
> Offer up incense at Apollo's shrine,
> Invoke the Muse to quit her calm abode,
> And waken Memory with a sleeping Ode.[76]

Again, in *The Prophesy of Famine* (1763), the poet speaks of himself, perhaps with Mason in his eye,

> Who cannot follow where trim fancy leads
> By prattling streams o'er flower-empurpled meads;
> Who often, but without success, have prayed
> For apt Alliteration's artful aid.[77]

And finally, in *The Author* (1763) occurs the line:

> Or dance with Mason on the first of May.[78]

Meanwhile, Mason was settling down in his new rectorship at Aston. Whitehead visited him in the summer of 1757, and wrote Lord Harcourt: "He is by much the finest preacher in the whole country, and villages and towns flock to hear him. He has a favorite blacksmith whom he has taught to sing Marcello's Psalms like an angel, and I suppose, to beat time with his hammer." [79]

[73] *Gent. Mag.*, XXX, 291.
[74] *Mon. Rev.*, XXIII, 57.
[75] Gray-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., 206.
[76] Line 287 *et seq.* Contemporary reviews note many answers provoked by the *Rosciad*, but none by Mason.
[77] Line 83 *et seq.* See also 59 *et seq.*
[78] Line 122.
[79] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 214.

According to Whitehead, he was pursuing his clerical functions with assiduity enough to satisfy even a Warburton. "I lead," he wrote to Harcourt, "the sweetest nothing of a life you can imagine, and yet I paint and I write and I play. My Paintings, I rub out; my writings, I burn; and, as to my playing, that exists only while my fingers are upon the harpsichord. O, but then I preach, and have such congregations and am so much admir'd that I am afraid it will make a Coxcomb of me. And of all Coxcombs (as your Lordship knows) an ecclesiastical Coxcomb is the worst. Be that as it may, I shall go preaching on to the end of the chapter. . . ." [80] By the end of summer, he is thinking of writing a commentary on Gray to explain the "obscurities" in *The Bard* and *The Progress of Poesy* [81] — a thing he never accomplished.

His curate, Delap, helped him by transcribing his literary labors.[82] The June following, Gray wrote Warton: "Poor Mason is all alone at Aston (for his curate is gone to be tutor to somebody) with an inflammation in his eyes, and could scarce see to write me a few lines." [83] This curate, Delap, became a figure of some prominence, as his biography [84] attests: he took a B.A. from Cambridge in 1747, and an A.M. in 1750; he was presented to the livings of Iford and Kingston near Lewes in Sussex,[85] and later became rector of Woollavington; he wrote *Marcellus a Monody*, some "hypochondrical elegies," *Hecuba*, acted at Drury Lane in 1761, *Royal Suppliants*, acted 1781, and numerous other works. In 1786, the *Monthly* called him a "clergyman of reputation and a scholar." [86] Apparently, he was a literary scion of the Gray-Mason School.

Into this paradise, however, of the young and promising rector and his lacrymose curate, Whitehead planned the introduction of an Eve. He was anxious to make a match between Mason and a certain "Miss Ford," who, as he wrote Harcourt from Bath, "is excellent in music, loves solitude, and has immeasurable affectations." Harcourt agreed with him that she was "the wife in

[80] *Ibid.*, VII, 8.
[81] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 350.
[82] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 10.
[83] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 32.
[84] See *D.N.B.*
[85] He was not "rector of Lewes," as Tovey suggests. Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 329, n.
[86] *Mon. Rev.*, LXXV, 60.

the world for Mason." [87] But nothing happened. Walpole later referred to Miss Ford's "scandalous letter" [88] to Lord Jersey; but we know nothing more of her. Whether Whitehead ever tactfully hinted to the lady of the young and promising rector, or whether he mentioned the music, solitude, and affectations to Mason, no proof has come to hand. Mason himself, however, within a twelvemonth, in October, 1759, was considering the question of the future "Mrs. Mason," and wrote Harcourt, who seemed to have been the general confidant in such tender matters, that he had had Wilson paint his picture in order to show her — whoe'er she might be — "what a pretty sort of fellow I was formerly, when I had my *hair tied up*, and was *a poet about town*." [89] He could not, moreover, have been unattractive; and "the name of Mason was beginning to be distinguished." [90]

Sometime toward the end of 1758, Mason almost alienated a valuable friend in the person of David Garrick. Where or how they met, does not appear. Garrick's complimentary verses in 1754 have already been noted — Mason, seemingly was reported to Garrick as having passed some unkind or even insulting remarks about him.[91] Mason managed, however, through Gray [92] and Warburton [93] to effect a reconciliation.

In January, 1759, as Mason did not feel himself equal to the Latin thesis and the long oral examination for degrees in divinity, he decided perforce to give up his Pembroke fellowship — an action which went "sorely against Mr. Brown's gizzard," [94] and which was doubtless a blow to his own fiscal stability. This resignation finally terminated his connection with Cambridge. He had not stayed there for some years, and never lived there again, only stopping occasionally to see Gray on his way between London and Yorkshire.

The dominating event, however, of the latter fifties was the composition and publication of *Caractacus*. Since the publication of the *Odes* in 1756, Mason seems to have been hard at work on it. Beginning in the spring of that year,[95] Mason, spurred on, as Gray

[87] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 220.
[88] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., III, 378. For the letter see *Gent. Mag.*, 1761, XXXI, 33-35, 95.
[89] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 12-13.
[90] *Quart. Rev.*, XV, 377, July, 1816.
[91] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 47.
[92] *Ibid.*
[93] Garrick *Correspondence*, I, 99.
[94] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 77.
[95] *Ibid.*, II, 34, 37, and I, 327, n.

ironically suggests, by the presence of the literary Delap, had "the dramatic part finished" and had "begun the Odes" by August, 1757, when Whitehead came to visit him.[96] During this period, Mason and Gray had been exchanging manuscripts at a rapid rate. Gray sent *The Bard* to Mason for suggestions: "Pray think a little about the conclusion," he wrote, "for all depends upon it." [97] And again: "I charge you send me some *Caractacus* before I die. . . . If you knew how bad I was, you would not wonder I could write no more." [98] And later: "I delight in your Epigram, but dare not show it anybody, for your sake; but I more delight to hear from Mr. Hurd that *Caractacus* advances. Am I not to see Mador's Song?" [99] In joking vein, Gray wrote: "Send me Elegy — my hoe is sharp." [100] And it must be said that Gray's changes were many; but, on the other hand, they were usually minute. Mason regularly accepted them gratefully. He realized the superior genius of his friend; in the following passage, he at once admitted it, and urged him to write: "I would give all I am worth, that is to say *Caractacus* and my *Ode to Mr. Jolliffe*, to see an *Ode to the King of Prussia* by your hand." [101] Certain commentators, forgetful of his "modesty," have said that Mason considered himself the first poet in England after his friend — which was indeed the case somewhat later. Others have let it be inferred that he was a mere hanger-on of Gray, a man who meanly made use of his friend's talents to improve his own work. The years that Mason had spent seeking an income for himself, and, that done, fulfilling the duties of his offices, Gray had given to Mediæval scholarship, so that by this time there was no comparison between the learning of the two men. Mason appealed for help in historical detail; and Gray, fresh from *The Bard*, replied: "I see methinks (as I sit on Snowdon) some glimpses of Mona and her haunted shades, and hope we shall be very good neighbors. Any Druidical anecdotes that I can meet with, I will be sure to send you." [102]

The first edition of *Caractacus* was brought out by Dodsley, May 30, 1759; a second appeared in June; and a third, the fol-

[96] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 214.
[97] Gray-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., 84.
[98] *Ibid.*, 93.
[99] *Ibid.*, 99-100.
[100] *Ibid.*, 112.
[101] *Ibid.*, 122-123.
[102] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 300.

lowing year.[103] There was an edition in Dublin, 1764, another in Bell's *British Theatre*, 1797, and still another in *Modern British Drama*, 1811. The play also came out "as altered for theatrical presentation," London, 1777. *The Lyrical Parts of Caractacus* appeared in 1776. The Baroness de Vasse translated it into French prose in 1785[104]; and, six years later, a Greek translation by G. H. Glasse was published at Oxford. There was also an Italian version by T. J. Matthias, Naples, 1823; and an American edition in *Select Plays*, Baltimore, 1804.[105]

Mason and Gray, usually associated by the public of the period, were becoming more and more widely known. The event that gave rise to the following anecdote, told by Cradock in his *Memoirs*, may well have occurred at about this time: "Foote [the comedian-manager] was not always inattentive to men of real abilities; for, when Gray and Mason once made some inquiries about places at his theatre in the Haymarket, he immediately wrote a polite note to them; and though the house was quite crowded, I saw that they were well accommodated with a front row in a side box: they duly estimated his attention, and mentioned it as it deserved on their return to Cambridge." [106]

The 1750's definitely started Mason upon his careers, ecclesiastical and artistic. Curiously enough, these two capacities blended very little. Influences of artistic interests seldom appear in his clerical life, except as his work as precentor or choir-master later called his musical taste into play; and, although a certain pious tone and an unmistakable straining after philosophic depth appear in some of his maturer works, these are probably to be imputed to literary convention as much as to the influence of his religious vocation. Scores and perhaps hundreds of worthy and respectable clerics of the day, actuated by more or less serious motives, composed "profane" works, and have sometimes been dealt with hardly for their pains and blamed for insincerity and apathy to their higher calling. Apathetic many of them were; but, if one regards the two sides of their lives, in the way that they probably did, as having

[103] Straus, *Dodsley*, 368 and 372.

[104] See Bibl. A, *sub Caractacus*.

[105] In the *British Museum Catalogue* appear the following: an edition of London, 1760, called on its title-page, plausibly enough, a third edition, and another edition, probably pirated, which states neither time nor place of publication.

[106] Cradock, *Memoirs*, 30.

functions essentially different but complementary, one must cast doubt on the charge of insincerity. The eighteenth century inherited the ideals of the Renaissance, Christian and Classical. To be sure, it failed to make a blending of the two that was lastingly satisfactory; but it recognized a certain value in both conceptions; and, modifying them to suit its own tendencies, rationalistic and sentimental, it displayed, in many biographies of the age, these two impulses, one toward religion, the other toward art, often quite separate, but each real and sincere. In Mason, we have a multiple personality, sometimes artist, sometimes cleric, occasionally critic, and occasionally politician. His vital force was fatally dissipated; but it is not quite fair to suppose that, therefore, he was insincere or wilfully careless in the performance of any of his functions: rather the opposite; he might probably have written better poetry, or at least better criticism, had he been more negligent of his priestly functions. And, indeed, even the little time and energy that remained for creative work, he divided among all the arts, choosing to take as his ideal the well-rounded gentleman of the Renaissance rather than the more specialized conception of our own day. Thus his life lacked not only fundamental unity but also essential depth and, in these very shortcomings, is characteristic of his generation. The complete gentleman was still the model of the age — even though the arts and sciences had so far advanced that superficiality must inevitably be the mark of any man who took all knowledge to be his province.

CHAPTER IV

MASON'S MIDDLE LIFE: 1760-1770

THE events of the 1760's flow in a somewhat commonplace current immediately out of the preceding decade: Romantic yearnings after lost ideals and melodramatic *éclat* have no particular place in Mason's life. He received several additional preferments in the Church, and became the usual eighteenth-century pluralist. His time was divided between his rectory at Aston, his canonry and precentorship at York, and his royal chaplaincy in London — with brief tarryings with Gray at Cambridge, with Harcourt at Nuneham, and perhaps with Warburton at Prior Park.

At the beginning of the decade, Mason wrote to Harcourt of the "multiplication of Dignitys lately conferr'd upon me"[1]: the appointment as chaplain to the new king, and the satiric attack, already discussed, of the two energetic journalists, Colman and Lloyd. In view of these "Dignitys," he jocosely begged the loan of his lordship's "gilt *en traineau*" in order to make a triumphant entry into London — quite in the manner of the recent coronation.[2] But neither clerical labors nor cutting iambics could keep Mason from his pen. He planned to write a history of English poetry with Gray; he published *Elegies* (1763) and collected his *Poems* (1764). In 1765, he married; and, two years later, his wife died of consumption. A small legacy came from his aunt; and, in 1768, Mason inherited the estate of Hutton in Yorkshire. The decade, as a whole, lacks somewhat the outstanding points of interest of the periods that immediately precede and follow; but it is the happiest time of Mason's life, and exemplifies biographically the historian's dictum: happy is the people whose annals are dull.

Mason was at his heyday in the Church. Lord Holdernesse was still alive, was still on good terms with Mason — or better, Mason was still on good terms with him — and Holdernesse still occupied,

[1] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 19-20. [2] *Ibid.*

at least sometimes, a position in which he could lend aid and preferment to his *protégé*. During the '50's he was generally in favor; and during the '60's he fell into a steady but slow decline at court. His political suzerain, the Duke of Newcastle, was a Whig; and the king was growing most ungratefully Tory. Holdernesse, therefore, settled down in his Cinque Ports, drew his pensions and fees, and, with his wife's profitable smuggling of finery from France, managed more and more to console himself with the solid comfort of affluence if not with the brilliance of a career. He was, however, in a position to do increasingly less for Mason, and, possibly on this account, fell in the latter's good opinion, until, in the '70's, Mason's disappointment ripened into dislike.

In the history of English letters, the prominence of a minor personality is largely governed by the power of a given party or the popularity of an opinion to which he gives expression. Milton can rise above the reign of Charles II and Shelley can stand a striking contrast to Georgian reaction; but, for a man of Mason's calibre, to fail to achieve his bishopric, to be shunted off the main track of events, means a half-prominence that begins in twilight obscurity and ends in oblivion. Mason's first rebuff came in 1760, when he asked Holdernesse for the Deanery of Canterbury, just vacant; and Holdernesse, having recently had a "miff" with the king over not receiving the garter, could not give his client much satisfaction.[3] Preferments during the years immediately following made up for this disappointment, but the new king was too self-willed to be overawed by the great Whig families, and Tories were given places in their stead.

By virtue of his chaplaincy, Mason seems to have received board and lodging a part of each year at Kensington; and, on October 23, 1760, Gray writes Brown: "I go to dine with that reverend gentleman at Kensington during his waiting." By virtue of his clerical dignities, Mason walked in the coronation procession of George III, and on September nineteenth, 1761, he was appointed chaplain to the new king.[4] On January 7, 1762, Dr. Fountayne, Dean of York, made him Canon Residentiary of that Cathedral,[5] a prefer-

[3] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 139-140, 144.

[4] See Appendix A.

[5] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 219-220.

ment accomplished through the good offices of Frederick Montagu, brother-in-law to the Dean; and, four days after, Gray wrote, his own dire straits perhaps sharpening his tongue: "I heartily rejoice with you in your establishment, and with myself that I lived to see it — to see your insatiable mouth stopped, and your anxious perriwig at rest and slumbering in a stall. The Bishop of London, you see, is dead; there is a fine opening. Is there nothing farther to tempt you? Feel your own pulse, and answer me seriously. It rains precentorships; you have only to hold up your skirt and catch them. I long to embrace you in your way to court . . ." [5a]

The precentorship to which Gray referred, together with the Prebend of Driffield, which had been annexed to it since 1485, the king, at the request of Holdernesse, conferred upon Mason on February 11 of the same year[6]; but, upon receiving the Prebend of Driffield, Mason resigned the Prebend of Holme.[7] His attendance as canon of York required his residence there for several months yearly; and his precentorship, giving scope, during these periods, to his interest in music, gave rise to a new anthem book and to various experiments with his choir. At York, Mason must have met the novelist Lawrence Sterne, who held the Prebend of North Newbald there from 1742 until his death in 1768[8]; and, during his periods at Aston, he probably met the future astronomer Herschel, who distinguished himself as a musician nearby at Doncaster.[9] As the Canonry and the Precentorship seem each to have been worth about £200 a year,[10] they must have restored him to something of his pristine affluence.

During the following summer, Gray planned to visit Mason at York, and asked him to find lodgings, "the cheaper the better." [11] By July 10, he had passed a week with "Mr. Precentor." By the

[5a] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 247-248. This last sentence is a reference to Mason's intended journey to London to kiss hands for the royal gift.

[6] Le Neve, *Fasti Ecclesiæ*, III, 183.

[7] See: Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 247-248; Scott, *Admissions*, III, 530; Appendix A; and Le Neve, *op. cit.*, III, 157. Le Neve gives the exact date as Feb. 11, 1762, on the promotion of Thomas Newton, editor of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, who (*Gent. Mag.*, XXXII, 95) was made Bishop of Bristol. Mason was succeeded by Henry Foster Mills, May 25, 1797.

[8] Le Neve, *op. cit.*, III, 190, 204. As I find no mention of Mason in the standard biographies of Sterne by Fitzgerald, Sichel, and Cross, and as Sterne hardly appears in Mason's correspondence, I judge that there was no intimacy between them.

[9] Miller, *Doncaster*, 161-162; Southey, *The Doctor*, II, 253-255.

[10] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 248.

[11] *Ibid.*, II, 260.

nineteenth, he had returned, and wrote to Brown: "The Precentor is very hopefully improved in dignity. His scarf sets the fullest about the ears; his surplice has the most the air of lawn-sleeves you can imagine in so short a time; he begins to complain of qualms and indigestions from repose and repletion; in short, *il tranche du Prelat.*" [12] Mason, then, by the end of 1762, was Rector of Aston, Chaplain to Lord Holdernesse and to the king, Prebendary of Driffield, Canon Residentiary and Precentor of York. The rectorship, canonry, and prebend, he held until his death in 1797; the chaplaincy to Lord Holdernesse ceased with his lordship's death in 1778; and Mason resigned his royal connection in 1772 just before publishing the *Heroic Epistle.* Mason was, indeed, a pluralist; but he followed Warburton's monitions, at least to the extent of a rather active fulfilment of his functions. With three months as canon at York, and a considerable time as chaplain in London, with his multifarious duties as rector at Aston, with the care of the minster choir, with his religious reading and private charities, it is no wonder that he was a busy person.

Not even such an avalanche of laborious good-fortune, however, could keep his pen entirely idle. During the year 1761, he wrote two five-act comedies, neither of which has ever been published: *The Surprise,*[13] the setting of which, the Barbadoes, is suggestive of romantic drama; and *The World of To-day.*[14] Walpole read both "carefully and with great pleasure." [15] In December, 1762, appeared two editions of his *Elegies.*[16] In collecting this thin volume, he had spent some ten years; and the contents consisted of but three poems: *To a Young Nobleman leaving the University,* "written in 1753"; *Written in the Garden of a Friend,* "written in 1758"; and *On the Death of a Lady* [Lady Coventry], "written in 1760." The *Gentleman's Magazine* quoted in full the verses *To a Young Nobleman.*[17] The *Elegies* were, on the whole, less popular than the *Odes;* but they went through some

[12] Gray-Mason *Correspondence,* Mitford ed., 291; see Mitford's note. By his reference to "Lawn Sleeves," Gray seems to have been twitting Mason with episcopal intentions; but I judge that the sally was no more serious than on a later occasion when it was obviously merely jocular. See note 42 to this chapter.

[13] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence,* Mitford ed., II, 404-407.

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] *Ibid.,* I, 7.

[16] Straus, *Dodsley,* 378. The first came out Dec. 7; the second, Dec. 28. Both were dated 1763.

[17] *Gent. Mag.,* Dec., 1762, XXXII, 592.

seven editions during Mason's lifetime,[18] and lived into the next century.

About this time,[19] Gray and Mason planned a *History of English Poetry*, not on a chronological scheme such as Warton later followed, but detailing each school's development separately, after a sketch drawn up by Pope.[20] Mason seems to have revised the plan, and, for the introduction, translated into English verse a form of the *Knytlinga Saga* which he called the *Song of Harold the Valiant*. Mason was as ignorant of Old Norse as Gray[21]; and, like Gray, he probably got his *Saga* from the French of Mallet, who in turn had translated it from the Latin of Bartholinus.[22] The *History*, like so many of Gray's projects, never materialized; and, when it became known that Warton planned to embark on a similar enterprise, Mason gave him Pope's plan and also the "considerably enlarged and extended" outline that he and Gray had intended to use.[23] Walpole never cared for Warton's work; and, in 1774, wrote Mason, suggesting: "Gray's and your plan might still be executed," [24] but Mason did not follow the suggestion.

Several minor works of Mason's may be disposed of with little comment: in 1765, he privately printed at York a five-act drama, *Œdipus*,[25] which had been begun by Whitehead and finished by himself. In spite of Lord Harcourt's commendation, it is of little account. "About the year 1766," he seems to have composed *Argentile and Curan*,[26] although he was apparently working on it still in 1772. It is a drama purely Elizabethan in character, and, although little known, has in it some of Mason's best work. The plot comes from Warner's *Albion's England;* but Mason seems to have used the fragment that appears in Percy's *Reliques*.[27]

[18] Chiefly in editions of Mason's *Poems*. See Bibl. A.

[19] Gosse dates the Gray fragments from the winter of 1760 or the spring of 1761 (Gray, *Works*, ed. Gosse, London, 1884, I, 324); by 1768, the scheme was abandoned. Gray, *Poems*, ed. 1768, 75.

[20] See Gray, *Works*, Aldine ed., I, cvii.

[21] See Mant, *Memoirs*, in Thomas Warton, *Works*, 1802, lxiii *et seq.*

[22] See Kittredge's *Appendix* in Phelps, *Gray*, xliv.

[23] Warton, *History*, I, 4. Gray sent Warton a copy of the plan, after some hesitation, in April, 1770. See Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 276. From Warton's Introduction, I judge that he received Mason's copy first.

[24] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VI, 72.

[25] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., II, 405.

[26] *Ibid.*, I, 33. See note.

[27] *Reliques*, II, 233. See Mason, *Works*, II, 208.

Sometime about this period, or possibly as late as 1783, Mason wrote *The Indians*,[28] a five-act tragedy of the early sixteenth century, which, like the two comedies, exists only in the original manuscript at Aston. The *British Museum Catalogue*, furthermore, lists as published in 1767, *A Supplement to Dr. Watts's Psalms and Hymns selected by Wm. Mason*, apparently a labor entered upon in connection with his precentorship at York.

During the year 1764, Mason brought out the first edition of his collected *Poems*. The *British Museum Catalogue* lists eight others during his lifetime; and my own gleanings in the libraries have added at least some half dozen further editions during the early nineteenth century.[29] The Glasgow impressions were brought out by the Foulis Brothers, publishers of Gray's poems, famous for their art-printing. Gray called their edition of the classics "equal (at least in beauty) to anything Europe can produce"[30]; but the eighteenth century is a period of decadence of the printing-press; and, to us, their edition of Mason is by no means extraordinary.

The *Poems* were prefaced by a dedicatory sonnet to Lord Holdernesse dated May 12, 1763, in which Mason ascribed his "lettered ease" to the patron that gave him the living at Aston, and touched rather pleasantly upon his own life there, planning and laying out his garden:

> . . . Here, as the light-wing'd moments glide serene,
> I weave the bower, around the tufted mead
> In careless flow the simple pathway lead,
> And strew with many a rose the shaven green.
> So, to deceive my solitary days,
> With rural toils ingenious arts I blend,
> Secure from envy, negligent of praise,
> Yet not unknown to fame, if D'Arcy lend
> His wonted smile to dignify my lays,
> The Muse's Patron but the Poet's Friend.

Mason, in spite of his objection to giving presentation copies, sent one to Walpole, who acknowledged it with a letter in which he declared: "I wish in return that I had anything literary to tell you or send you, that would please you half as much."[31] This

[28] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., II, 404.
[29] See Bibl. A.
[30] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 29.
[31] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., IV, 156.

letter seems to open the Walpole-Mason correspondence that was destined to play so noteworthy a part in the lives of both men. Since meeting on the occasion of *Elfrida*, in the early '50's, the two had apparently drifted apart; during the '60's, they exchanged an occasional letter; but, after Gray's death in 1771, the composition of the *Memoirs* and of the *Heroic Epistle* brought them into a close intimacy and kept the post, and even private messengers, busy between Aston and Strawberry Hill. In writing this first letter, Walpole says, he addressed it "only on the authority" of a line in the dedicatory sonnet. Mason replied, pluming himself a bit on his clerical zeal: "I cannot help, however, animadverting on your reason for directing it to Aston, which you say was on the authority of my Book, that is to say 'because I had written a sonnet here on the 12th of last May, you concluded I should be here also in the very depth of one of the worst winters in the memory of Man.' A conclusion this which would only become a Bishop to make, and he too ought to be one's diocesan. I know nobody else that should expect a poor rector to keep such strict parochial residence. The fact, however, is on your side; but I must own I am here much against my will, and shall therefore move southward, whenever I can muster up courage sufficient to wade seven mile to a turnpike." [32] The continuance of this friendship is testified by Walpole's reprinting of Hoyland's poems at Strawberry Hill, in 1769 — an edition probably due to the suggestion of Stonehewer and Mason.[33] In the spring of the same year, moreover, Mason criticized Walpole's melodramatic tragedy, *The Mysterious Mother*, revising rather fully the plan and the solution. Walpole expressed "gratitude" and added: "I am astonished to see with how few lines you have been able totally to change the canvass of a whole play. . . ." [34]

Meanwhile, Mason had been reading and corresponding assiduously. In December, 1763, as he wrote Harcourt, he was going through Ariosto in Italian. Gray urged him to read Lowth's attack on Warburton[35]; and he and Gray exchanged satiric squibs. During the early part of the summer of 1765, Gray, on a visit

[32] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., IV, 157, n.
[33] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 316, n.
[34] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., V, 165.
[35] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 96.

to York, found Mason Shakespeareanly occupied — perhaps on a piece of editing.[36] Mason was chafing, as usual, against his enforced residence at York while his garden at Aston was in its prime; and Gray, after leaving, penned the following, and mailed it to Mason[37]:

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE TO MRS. ANNE, REGULAR SERVANT TO THE REV. MR. PRECENTOR, OF YORK.

A moment's patience, gentle Mistris Anne
(But stint your clack for sweet Saint Charitie):
'Tis Willey begs, once a right proper man,
Though now a book, and interleav'd you see.
Much have I borne from canker'd critic's spite,
From fumbling baronets, and poets small,
Pert barristers, and parsons nothing bright:
But what awaits me now is worst of all.
'Tis true, our master's temper natural
Was fashion'd fair in meek and dove-like guise;
But may not honey's self be turn'd to gall
By residence, by marriage, and sore eyes?
If then he wreak on mé his wicked will,
Steal to his closet at the hour of prayer;
And (when thou hear'st the organ piping shrill)
Grease his best pen, and all his scribbles tear.
Better to bottom tarts and cheesecakes nice.[38]
Better the roast meat from the fire to save,
Better be twisted into caps for spice,
Than thus be patch'd and cobbled in one's grave.
So York shall taste what Clouet[39] never knew,
So from our works sublimer fumes shall rise;
While Nancy earns the praise to Shakespeare due,
For glorious puddings and immortal pies.[40]

Politics took up much of Mason's thought, if not of his activity. To his birthright of Whiggism, he added a general desire for

[36] *Ibid.*, III, 393, says Mason was editing Shakespeare. That he was interested in Shakespearean editions is indubitable. A MS. letter quoted at some length in the *Maggs Catalogue* (Christmas, 1921, p. 127) shows him writing to Malone on May 26, 1792, congratulating the latter on his restoration of Shakespeare's text, and suggesting a new note for a passage in *All's Well*. He implies, however, that his interest in Shakespeare's text belonged to a very much earlier date.

[37] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 76-77.

[38] Probably a reference to "the stupid Warburton and his active cook," as Schelling terms them.

[39] A famous cook of the period, in the service of the Duke of Newcastle, 1742-c. 1753. See *N. and Q.*, 8th Ser., XI, 195.

[40] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 76-77. Tovey has annotated these verses very justly.

reform, for a more representative Parliament, and, in spite of being a pluralist himself, for the abolition of sinecures in church and state — especially Tory sinecures. With this attitude, his natural leader was the elder Pitt; and, when that great statesman accepted a pension from the king in 1761, Gray, himself quite disillusioned, wrote to Brown in jocose yet bitter vein that he expected "to learn Mason had taken laudanum."[41] In 1766, when Pitt became Earl of Chatham, Mason wrote a satirical ode on his elevation to the peerage[42]; and Gray, in return, jocosely accused his friend of angling for a bishopric. Gray liked the ode "vastly, and thought it very well turned and easy, especially the diabolical part of it." This piece of composition, not published at the time, is significant as the harbinger of Mason's satires against the king and his pensioner, Chambers. At about this same period, Gray sent Mason *The Cambridge Courtship*,[43] a stinging lampoon on Lord Sandwich. Thus the two clandestine satirists laughed together over their unshot arrows, a situation repeated, only with more contemporary effect, when Mason and Walpole ten years later collaborated in a series of literary attacks upon the Tory government.

Whitehead's efforts as marriage-maker have already received space in these pages; and apparently Mason's friends continued to consider him a suitable subject for matrimonial gossip. On the third of February, 1763, Balguy wrote Joseph Warton from Sheffield: "Mr. Mason is within less than ten miles of me; but I have not seen him. Some say he is writing a comedy; others, that he is going to be married. The reports *may* be both true; but I think it rather more likely they should be both false."[44] Whether Balguy's "report" was true or not at the time of his writing, it undoubtedly was true a twelvemonth later. On February 21, 1764, Gray wrote to Warton: "Mason has passed three weeks here with me on his way to town. The general report was that he was going to be married out of hand: but I find it was only a faint sort of tendency that way, that may or may not come to

[41] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 241.

[42] *Ibid.*, III, 117-118. Obviously a bishopric could hardly be expected to result from a satire that would (if published) doubtless offend Whigs and Tories alike!

[43] *Correspondence of Gray, etc.*, Toynbee ed., II, 226, n. 7; and Burney, *Diary*, II, 125-126, n.

[44] Wooll, *Warton*, 288.

something of maturity just as the season of the year shall incline him. The best I can tell you of her is that she is no fine lady,[45] and the worst, that her fortune is not large; now you know it might have been a fine lady with no money at all. He still talks of visiting Old Park [Warton's estate] before he is tied down to his Summer Residence." [46] By July the tenth, the affair had progressed somewhat. Gray chronicled the state of things for Warton's benefit: "Mason does not seem very impatient. . . . I expected consummation, and was praying heaven to give him a good and gentle Gouverness: no man wants such a thing more in all senses; but his greatest wants do not make him move a foot the faster, nor has he, properly speaking, anything one can call a passion about him, except a little malice and revenge." [47] About the same time, he wrote to Mason: "I rejoice; but has she common sense? Is she a gentlewoman? Has she money? Has she a nose? I know she sings a little, twiddles on the harpsichord, hammers at sentiment, and puts herself in an attitude, admires a cast in the eye, and can say *Elfrida* by heart. But these are only the virtues of a maid. Do let her have some wife-like qualities, and a double portion of prudence, as she will have not only herself to govern, but you also, and that with an absolute sway. Your friends, I doubt not, will suffer for it. However, we are very happy, and have no other wish than to see you settled in the world. We beg you would not stand fiddling about it, but be married forthwith, and then take chaise, and come . . . all the way to Cambridge to be touched by Mr. Brown, and so to London, where, to be sure, she must pass the first winter. If good reasons (and not your own or her coquetry) forbid this, yet come hither yourself for our copuses and Welsh rabbits are impatient for you." [48]

The lady in question was one Maria Sherman [49] of Hull. Gray, seemingly, had never laid eyes upon her, for he hopes "her hair is not red though." [50] In the fall of 1764, he wrote Brown: "Mr. Mason who has been in Yorkshire, has seen the future bride. She has just such a nose as Mason himself; so you see it was made

[45] "Fine lady": cf. Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 133.
[46] *Ibid.*, III, 32.
[47] *Ibid.*, III, 36.
[48] *Ibid.*, III, 68.
[49] Miller gives Sharman, and alleges that Mason proposed to her because of her taciturnity, *Doncaster*, 161.
[50] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 69.

in heaven." [51] Cary, writing in 1846, asserts, on what authority I do not know: "I have heard that this lady had so little regard for the art in which her husband excelled, that on his presenting her with a copy of verses, after the wedding was over, she crumpled them up and put them in her pocket unread." [52] This anecdote, if it be not spurious, probably signifies only the natural nervousness of the bride. Of her personal appearance, we know nothing except that Gray speaks of her as "little" and Balguy as "very handsome." [53] She remains a faint, unassertive figure in Mason's biography; but the taste of love and domestic happiness, cut short by her death, was perhaps one thing that, by its disappointment, helped to sour Mason's passing years, and to turn his pen from sentimentalism to satire — a change not uncommon to the Romantic temperament. The entry of Mason's marriage appears in the Church of St. Mary's Lowgate at Hull:

> William Mason of the Close of the Cathedral Church of St. Peter in York, and Mary Sherman of the Parish were married in this Church by License this Twenty-Fifth Day of September in the Year One Thousand Seven Hundred and Sixty-five, by me Arthur Robinson.
>
> This marriage was solemnized between us.
>
> W. Mason
> Mary Sherman
>
> In the presence of
> Eliza Cayley
> Wm. Sherman.[54]

The facts of Mason's married life, Scott sums up in two sentences: "Mason married at St. Mary Lowgate, Hull, 25 September 1765, Mary, daughter of William Sherman, storekeeper to the garrison at Hull. . . . His wife died at Bristol 24 March 1767, aged 28, and was buried in Bristol Cathedral, there is a monument to her memory with some lines by Mason and Gray." [55] Except for the exact day of her death, these facts are all substantiated

[51] Gray-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., 331.

[52] Cary, *Lives of the English Poets*, 203. Cf. Gray's remark just quoted that she could "say *Elfrida* by heart." Or does Gray's "I know" mean merely "I take it for granted"?

[53] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 96.

[54] *N. and Q.*, 6th Ser., IV, 346. *D.N.B.* gives Sept. 24, 1764. The "Arthur Robinson" who performed the ceremony was probably Mason's uncle, who, like Mason's wife, was a resident of Hull. See Appendix C.

[55] Scott, *Admissions*, III, 531.

either by the Gray-Mason letters or by Mason's *Chronology* at the end of the Walpole-Mason letters.

Mason's brief married life was undoubtedly a happy one.[56] On the fifth of March, 1766, Gray wrote Warton that Mason "never passed so happy a winter as the last." Gray nicknamed Mrs. Mason "Argentile" after the heroine of Mason's play, and wrote to know how she passed three weeks "of Lapland weather." [57] This inquiry after her health is significant. A letter of Warburton's[58] throws further light upon the situation: "Mason called on me the other day; he is grown extremely fat, and his wife extremely lean, indeed in the last stages of consumption. I inquired of her health; he said she was something better; and that, I suppose, encouraged him to come out; but Dr. Balguy tells me that Heberden says she is irretrievably gone, and has touched upon it to him, and ought to do it to her." [59]

On August 26, 1766, "Mason is at Aston. He is no longer so anxious about his wife's health, as he was, though I find she still has a cough; and, moreover, I find she is not with child: but he made such a bragging, how could one choose but believe him?" [60] So wrote Gray to Warton. A month or two later, Mason evidently spoke to Gray of the dangerous condition of his wife. Mason seems anxious to escape from his detested Residence as Canon, and to bring her to London for better medical advice.[61] On November 18, 1766, Gray wrote Brown: "Mason is here [in London], and has brought his wife, a pretty, modest, innocent, interesting figure, looking like eighteen though she is near twenty-eight." [62] He continues: "She does not speak only in whispers, and her cough is as troublesome as ever; yet I have great hopes there is nothing consumptive. She is strong and in good spirits. We were all at the opera together on Saturday last. They desire their loves to you." [63] During this London residence, tradition says Mason took a house in Cleveland Row,[64] apparently an expensive and fashionable establishment.

[56] Gray-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., 351.
[57] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 132-133.
[58] No. cxci.
[59] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 115, and note.
[60] *Ibid.*
[61] *Ibid.*, III, 122-123.
[62] *Ibid.*, III, 129.
[63] *Ibid.*
[64] Wheatley and Cunningham, I, 422-423.

By February 21, 1767, Mason wrote to Gray of his wife's being "in a most weak condition"; indeed, he has not "any substantial hopes of her recovery." [65] Mason's letter to Gray is touching in spite of a certain eighteenth-century stiffness: ". . . There are few men in the world that can have a competent idea of what I have of late felt, and still feel, yet you are one of those few, and I am sure, will give me a full share of your pity. Were I to advise Stonehewer to a wife, it should certainly be to a fine lady; it should not be to one he could love to the same degree that I do this gentle, innocent creature." Mason was preparing his mind for the inevitable loss, a loss that he must have been expecting for months: perhaps it was partly to cheer his wife's last months that he lived with pomp and circumstance at Cleveland Row to give her some brief taste of the golden world with which she had never previously had a chance to mingle.

In March of 1767, he brought her to "the hot-wells at Bristol," [66] still in search of medical aid; but she died within the month.[67] Her grave, with a monument by "Athenian" Stuart,[68] is in Bristol Cathedral; and Mason with the help of Gray, who contributed the last three lines,[69] composed the epitaph which it bears; but the occasion is commemorated in literature less by the epitaph than by Gray's famous letter of condolence:

> I break in upon you at a moment when we least of all are permitted to disturb our friends, only to say that you are daily and hourly present to my thoughts. If the worst be not yet passed, you will neglect and pardon me; but, if the last struggle be over, if the poor object of your long anxieties be no longer sensible to your kindness or to her own sufferings, allow me (at least in idea, for what could I do were I present more than this) to sit by you in silence, and pity from my heart, not her who is at rest, but you who lose her. May He who made us, the Master of our pleasures and of our pains, preserve and support you. Adieu!
>
> I have long understood how little you had to hope.[70]

[65] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 133.

[66] Warburton, *Letters*, 396, d. Mar. 31, 1767.

[67] March 27, according to Mason's *Chronology*. See Appendix A. This date is almost certainly correct. Cf. Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 136-137.

[68] *Ibid.*, III, 145.

[69] Gray-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., 380.

[70] *Ibid.*, 377.

Of Bassanio, critics say, and not without justice, that he must have been possessed of a character of great nobility and charm to have had such a friend as Antonio. Can no such argument apply to Mason? [71]

After his wife's funeral, Mason wrote of a visit to "my Wadsworth relations" [72] near Bristol; and, a little later, he appeared at Aston, burying himself in art and music [73] and in the composition of *The English Garden*.[74] The actuality of the sorrow, time must slowly have dimmed. Thus closed this brief period of married life when Mason was taken out of himself and given a human interest more vital than his sentimental and somewhat æsthetic dilettantism. Many years later, in 1782, he wrote to Walpole of Maria Sherman as one "who you know was once so very dear to me, and whose memory will ever sit closest to my heart." [75] This surely was no marriage of convenience to a "fine lady." She seems to have had few worldly advantages, a "small fortune" of only some £2,000,[76] and a social position certainly not above Mason's.

"I was once asked," wrote Mason to Walpole at another period, "why I did not marry again. My answer was that I could not find a woman that had the qualifications of a certain female whom the person who asked me knew. 'The qualifications of her! why she is old, ugly and a termagant into the bargain.' 'No matter for that! She was born in a boat; her mother was drowned; and she has no relation or country in the world, — those are the qualifications I require, in the wife of my bosom.' " [77] Whether this means that Mason did not get along with his wife's relations or with his own or with both, is difficult to ascertain; but, somewhat earlier in the same letter, he remarks: "Relations are not 'those cordial drops' which somebody says,

> ' — Heaven in our cup has thrown
> To make the nauceous draught of life go down.'

[71] Bailey (*Studies in Some Famous Letters*, 66) has already raised this question.
[72] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 137. See Appendix C.
[73] *Ibid.*
[74] Mason, *Works*, I, 379.
[75] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VIII, 201, n.
[76] *Ibid.*
[77] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., I, 311.

As least, I don't find them so, no more than do you yourself; for all my summer has been dawdled away in finding out the best way to be serviceable to a near one of my own, and I doubt without much effect." The tone of these latter quotations illustrates only too well a certain crabbed diffidence that appears in Mason's later life.

The brief span of Mason's married life probably contains the happiest days of his maturity, the period of his fullest self-realization; for Mason was not essentially an artist; and, had he contented himself with living the normal life of a man of culture, without striving (especially in so many directions at once) for artistic fame, the tenor of his way would have passed more evenly with more complete fulfilment of the useful and gracious, if not notable, object for which Nature intended him. His wife is a pale figure, interesting chiefly for what she meant to him. It is significant that he wrote, painted, and composed scarcely at all during the short period of their life together: for once, reality was taking up his attention more than the unreal emotions of *Elfrida* or the didactic generalities of the odes, the elegies, and *The English Garden.* Benn has attributed the sterility of English thought in the middle and latter eighteenth century to the diversion of interest to practical matters — a natural outgrowth of English Utilitarian philosophy.[78] Quite as important a cause, however, is to be found, I believe, in the confined social system, which fostered a dilettante conception of life that lacked at once the systematic intellectual effort of the scholar and the spiritual insight of the creative artist. Men of position evaded life in all its multiplicity of experience and struggle. Walpole collected oddities at Strawberry Hill, and made his scandalous gossip into a sort of brief chronicle of the time; but he felt himself first of all a "gentleman," a static ornament in the immovable structure of English society. Mason was only like his generation in that he took advantage of his birth, position, and income to follow a sort of rarefied existence. The age had smothered action in a sort of "propriety"; and propriety governed the rather monotonous current of his life,

[78] A. W. Benn, *History of English Rationalism in the Nineteenth Century*, London, 1906, I, 118. He makes special exception of Irishmen like Burke and Scotchmen like Hume.

with literature as an outlet for such surplus emotions as he had: melancholy, love of country, and bitterness against the Tories. Partly, one may suppose, through the wreck of his domestic happiness, partly through the disappointment of his ecclesiastical ambitions, some slight natural acerbity grew in time rather more evident: indeed, as Gray had on occasion said, he had hardly a passion "except a little malice and revenge." Had Mason's period of poverty in the '50's been a long and arduous trial of the spirit, he might have accomplished at least a few fine lines like "poor Smart" to whom he gave charity; but Mason had never allowed himself a real chance to react upon experience. His marriage was one of the few touches of contact, one all too brief and insufficient; for Mason had "built his soul a costly pleasure-house"; and, at the death of his wife, he once more entered it, to play the dilettante almost without pause for the rest of his days.

A few fragmentary vignettes remain of Mason's life during this period. His surroundings at Aston, and even at York, were essentially rustic. Rural society was but little advanced over that which Addison pictures in his de Coverley Papers. The muddy roads and damp climate made travel, even to a neighboring vicar's, a burdensome journey; and, aside from the clergy and the more educated squires, hopeless rusticity enveloped minds untroubled by travel, magazines, or even newspapers. Traditions and superstitions were as real during this period of "Enlightenment," as the witches of *Macbeth* to the Elizabethan audience: "the country-folk are firmly persuaded," wrote Mason to Gray, "that the storm (which made us get up here) was raised by the devil, out of revenge to Comber for preaching at him the day before in the Minster." [79] And this around about that ancient seat of culture, the city of York! No wonder Mason pined for his constant open house at Aston where the Robinsons and Wadsworths, Lord Holdernesse — not to mention Gray and Brown — might come as guests!

In June of 1767, Gray was entertained at Aston, we may judge with royal good cheer. "Here we are Mr. Brown and I, in a wilderness of sweets, an Elysium among coal-pits, a terrestrial heaven. Mind, it is not I, but Mason, that says all this, and bids

[79] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 154.

me tell it you. . . . Mr. Brown owns the pleasantest day he ever passed was yesterday at Roche-Abbey [a ruin near Aston]; it is divine." [80] Here Mason, by choice, spent what time he had free from York and London, with his flowers, his piano, his paintings and poetry, assisted in all things by his curate Alderson, "a good creature." [81] Gray asked Mason to find a good drawing-teacher in York who would go to Old Park for six weeks to instruct Warton's daughters: "but above all, he must be elderly, and if ugly and ill-made so much the more acceptable. The reasons we leave to your prudence." [82] And in October, Gray was with Mason again, this time at York.[83] About this time, Dr. Joseph Warton wrote to his brother Thomas, describing his visit with Mason at York: ". . . thence to York; there the first day, we saw the Cathedral, which exceeds all our churches; stayed a second day (the 29th of May); went to full service, heard Mr. Mason in residence preach, was found out by him, who drank tea with us the same afternoon, and insisted on our supping with him. — He is the most easy, best natured, agreeable man, I ever met with, and I'll tell you another time how we came to know him. He is Precentor, has an excellent house elegantly furnished; that very evening he expected Mr. Gray to sup with him, on his journey Northward; but, alas! he did not come. — He desir'd many compliments to you." [84] These touches are typical. It remains to mention but one more. The characteristic mark of the eighteenth-century English gentleman was not his hounds, his Toryism, his Oxford-or-Cambridge Latin and Greek: the essence of rural gentility, cultivated or boorish, was the hoarding and care of choice vintages. This hallmark of genuineness in his time and place is verily stamped upon Mason when, in a tone almost of pathos, he regrets to Lord Harcourt that his port has been "a little thickened by removing." [85]

It remains only to speak of a number of minor events in the latter years of the decade, subsequent to Mason's married life. On July 15, 1767, he wrote that his "old aunt" was dead and had

[80] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 146.
[81] *Ibid.*, III, 159.
[82] *Ibid.*, III, 159-160.
[83] *Ibid.*
[84] Woolf, *Warton*, 308.
[85] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 25.

left him some small inheritance.[86] This lady is probably Mary, wife of Arthur Robinson of Hull.[87] The same letter says that Archbishop Drummond of York begged Mason "with many tears" to write an epitaph on his daughter.[88] Mason did so, and sent the first draft to Gray for "correction," revised it, and sent it to Drummond. Such poetic courtesies on Mason's part must have been common enough, and were indeed a compliance with the eighteenth-century custom of celebrating every significant event with poetry—a custom as worthy in intent as it was unfortunate in general practice.

During this decade, Mason busied himself considerably with his property at Aston. He began with "improvements" in 1760[89]; and, by 1771,[90] he had "pulled down the old rectory and built another very commodious house, changing the site so as from his windows to command a beautiful and extensive prospect, bounded by the Derbyshire hills. He also much enlarged and improved the garden, planting a small group of tulip-trees at the farther end, near the summer-house dedicated to Gray. In another site, opposite the front door, and seen between some clumps, is a terminus, with the head of Milton: on the landing of the staircase, a copy of the Bocca Padugli eagle from Strawberry Hill. Since Mason's time, the country round Aston has been much exposed by the woods being cut down, and the beauty of the views from his place in that respect injured." [91] The building of the new rectory probably was the occasion of Mason's request to Gray two years later: "If therefore," he writes, "it be not inconvenient to you I should be glad to borrow £100 of you for a little pocket money during the present sequestration of my ecclesiastical and temporal concerns." [92] The new house and garden were a source of constant pride and delight to Mason.

Seven years later, he wrote Walpole: "He [the Duke of Newcastle] praised my house, and said it must have cost me a good deal of money. I said it did, and perhaps I was imprudent to lay out

[86] Gray-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., 391; and Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 147.

[87] See Appendix C, and the genealogies in Foster and in Hunter.

[88] Gray-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., 394.

[89] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 150.

[90] *Ibid.*, III, 280.

[91] *Ibid.*, II, 150.

[92] *Ibid.*, III, 311, 316.

so much, but it gave me consolation to think I had by doing so, made a pretty adequate return to Lord H[oldernesse] for his patronage; especially as the living was retained in the family, and as to the situation I thought it so pleasant that a man might very well preserve his independency in it, the only thing which I thought worth preserving." [93]

Mason was seemingly obliged to ask Gray for this loan in 1770 in spite of the fact that in the meantime, he had come into his legacy from Hutton of Marske, who had died January 12, 1768.[94] On the third of February, 1768, Gray wrote Nicholls from Pembroke College: "Mason is here with us, and will stay (I should hope) sometime: he is even going to hire a small house. . . . Mr. Hutton being dead, he has now a landed estate, the income of which in a few years will be considerable." [95] By September, the news reached Mrs. Delany, and she wrote it to Miss Dewes: "I hear Mr. Mason has an estate left him of £1500 a year by a distant relation; it is happy when fortune falls into such good hands." [96]

In August, 1768, Mason was at Hornby Castle overseeing the laying out of a garden at Old Park, Warton's estate.[97] The next month, he appeared in the rôle of ecclesiastical patron. As Precentor of York, he had in his gift the living of Oddington in Gloucester. He asked Gray whether Brown, Master of Pembroke Hall, would accept it, and Gray suggested that Mason give it to Wood, one of his own former curates.[98] Perhaps Warburton is referring to this matter when he writes in *Letters of an Eminent*

[93] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., I, 297.

[94] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 180.

[95] This legacy is the subject of several errors in writers on Mason. Polwhele (*Traditions and Recollections*, I, 220) quotes an apocryphal declaration on Mason's part "that when he came to the possession of his estate, the first thing he did to testify to the world his principles, was the giving up of his Chaplainship to the King." Mason, as his correspondence with Walpole proves, did not give up his chaplaincy until well on in the seventies, in fact immediately previous to his publication of the anti-Chambers satires. Nichols, in *Literary Anecdotes* (II, 241), says that the estate was in the East Riding of Yorkshire, whereas Marske is in the North Riding, and there is every reason to suppose that that was the estate that Mason inherited. Mitford, by an error of transcription, gives the date as June instead of January, and Stephen, in *D.N.B.*, copies his mistake. (See Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 179.) These little points, of minor import in themselves, are yet of value in determining the worth of the "authorities" who utter them.

[96] Delany *Correspondence*, Sec. Ser., I, 239.

[97] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 206.

[98] *Ibid.*, III, 209.

Prelate: "Poor Dr. Atwell's death throws a good living into the hands of Mr. Mason (for his [Atwell's?] late curate, Upton, told me it was capable of great improvement), and will, I hope restore peace to the Chapter of Gloucester."[99] How Mason finally got Brown the living of Streatham in the Isle of Ely remains for later pages to narrate. The following year, Mason was applied to for aid and advice in arranging the separation of Mrs. Ettrick, Warton's sister, from her husband.[100] Apparently, the separation proved unnecessary. In August of 1769, Gray wondered "how you are accommodated where you are, and what you are doing with General Carey"[101] — a question to which the author of the present work has found no answer.

The decade from 1760 to 1770 is full of fragments. Mason was undoubtedly giving his best time and effort to things clerical; and his best energies were sapped by the necessity of constant, laborious travel. This made any prolonged creative effort impossible. In a mass of detail, interesting only as illustrative of the period or of Mason's mental development, a few events stand out: the publication of his book of *Elegies* is noteworthy; his marriage is a primary biographical fact; his new rectory and garden at Aston remain to this day — if the Great War has not swept them, with so much else in England, into the past; and his legacies from his aunt and from Hutton are significant of his later opulence. For the rest, Mason was living the regular life of clergyman and country gentleman of the period, attending to his duties and concerns in a decent, if not remarkable, fashion, and, for half-serious amusement, dabbling with thought and literature and the arts, in a way that was not very productive in itself but that helped to prepare England for the thinkers, the artists, and the men of letters who were to come. Mason's generation was germinal of the Romantic Movement; and he, like the rest, experimented in literature with the Sentimentalism of Shaftesbury and Rousseau, and thus helped to prepare intellectual England for the acceptance of that philosophy which, combined with a Utilitarian and Scientific strain, the nineteenth century found the fittest expression of its inner needs and of its social and political ideals.

[99] Warburton, *Letters*, 310.
[100] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 320.
[101] *Ibid.*, III, 231.

CHAPTER V

MASON'S PRIME: 1770-1780

THE decade of the 1770's, for all that it was Mason's busiest and most significant period, still found him leading a life "sedentary and picktoothish," [1] anything but the *Sturm und Drang* that one associates with a truly Romantic biography. His days were still full to overflowing with the same activities, clerical and lay, literary and philistine. Some of these are interesting in themselves, such as his *Memoirs of Gray*, his *English Garden*, and his satires against Chambers; but they are neither pervaded by any one purpose nor in any special way related to one another. Early in the decade, the friendship with Gray gave place to an intimacy with Walpole; and the latter's influence certainly did not make Mason any the less a dilettante.

Late in the spring of 1770, Gray visited Aston for the last time[2]; and, on October twenty-fourth, he urged Mason to stop at Cambridge on the way to London.[3] In the same letter, Gray spoke of a fit of gout, and added: "I should not mention the thing, but that I am well persuaded it will soon be your own case, as you have so soon laid aside your horse, and talk so relishingly of your old port." [4] The next winter, Gray says: "Mason is in Town taking his swing, like a Boy in breaking-up time." [5] Mason planned to visit him in February when Palgrave was to be in Cambridge; for "the Professor" was so "touchy" that Mason was "afraid of being alone with him." [6] Gray's health, never robust, was almost imperceptibly declining; and, on July 30, 1771, he died. He left Mason "all his books," [7] including the Etiennes' [8] edition of the Greek *Anthology*, interleaved with valuable notes and a copious index.[9] All of Gray's own "papers and writings,"

[1] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VI, 339, n.
[2] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 286.
[3] *Ibid.*, 295-296.
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Ibid.*, III, 302.
[6] Nichols, *Illust.*, VIII, 636.
[7] Gray-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., 458.
[8] See Tovey's note in Gray *Letters*, III, 176.
[9] Mant, *Memoirs*, in Thomas Warton, *Works*, cx.

Mr Brown. Notwithstanding this the Bp set every engine at Work to stop the Business, he might give it to his Nephew. & even got for B to resign his pretentions on a promise of putting him on his list for some other preferment that might afterwards fall. — But by our getting the Kings hand hastily to the Presentation & passing it briskly thro all the offices up to the great Seal, the Bp was forced to submit to it with the worst grace possible. And now Our honest friend is actually in possession of a Living worth near £300 within Ten miles of Cambridge with addrd to his Mastership (without it would have hardly been a maintenance) will make him as much happier than the Bishop as he is better than all the Bench put together.

I have had Pergolesis Mass by me sometime but as there is no more single Airs in it besides those you have I have not thought it worth while to send it to you. but a line from you at any time shall command it.

Madame Sirmen the female fiddler passes all Encomium. She is the only thing I have heard since I came in the musical way worth mentioning. Her Piano is astonishing, ipsa mollities.

I neither wish to see J Dixon at Alston
nor you at Petersburg because I know
I should then wish to see you both more
than ever. Such as this is I hope you
will feel the meaning of it which is much
better than understanding it.

Mr Pit I understand is perfectly recovered.
If I can learn when Pa intends to be
at Cambridge I have some thought of
going down there for a week or so before
my writing in March commences. But I
dare not go there unless Pa meets me
for the Professor is so touchy that I am
afraid of being alone with him.

Yours very sincerely
W. Mason

Remember me kindly to J Dixon & Frank

moreover, were to be destroyed or preserved at Mason's discretion; and Mason and Brown were the executors of the will.[10]

Brown was an old friend of Gray's; and Mason at this time had just succeeded in arranging his presentation to a living near Cambridge. In a letter to Foster, he described the difficulties involved:

I am not conscious of any superlative Degree of Spirits. Frisky [as Gray had said] indeed I have been & Frisky in a good Cause. For by The Friskiness of myself and some of my Friends My new-lord of Ely has been prevented from succeeding in an act of rascally rapaciousness; wch outdoes evry instance that ever occured in the annals of Episcopacy since the reformation. Longa est Fabula; & it must be defferd till we meet. in the meanwhile take the sum of it. The Living of Streatham in the Isle of Ely became vacant during the vacancy of the See; The Duke of Grafton procurd it from the King, in the handsomest way, for Mr. Brown. Notwithstanding this the Bp set evry engine at Work to stop the Business; that he might give it to his Nephew. & even got Mr. B to resign his pretentions on a promise of putting him on his list for some other preferment that might afterwards fall. — But by our getting the Kings hand hastily to the Presentation & passing it briskly thro all the offices up to the great Seal, the Bp was forced to submit tho with the worst grace possible. And now Our honest friend is actually in possession of a Living worth near £300 within ten miles of Cambridge wch added to his Mastership (that without it would have hardly been a maintce) will make him as much happier than the Bishop as he is better than all the bench put together.[11]

Stonehewer, Mason, and Brown raised to Gray's memory the handsome monument that stands in Westminster Abbey.[12] Walpole wrote to Cole, July 24, 1778: "the tomb for Mr. Gray is actually erected and at the generous expense of Mr. Mason, and with an epitaph of four lines, as you heard, and written by him."[13] The *Gentleman's Magazine* for September of the same year quoted the well-known quatrain:

No more the Grecian Muse unrivall'd reigns,
To Britain let the nations homage pay!
She boasts a Homer's fire in Milton's strains,
A Pindar's rapture in the lyre of Gray.[14]

[10] Gray-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., 458.
[11] Nichols, *Illust.*, VIII, 635-636.
[12] Mason, *Works*, I, 141, n.
[13] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VII, 100.
[14] *Gent. Mag.*, XLVIII, 431.

The obvious echo of Gray's own *Progress of Poesy*, may detract from the originality of the piece; but it adds to the appropriateness. Sometime before the completion of the monument, Mason and Brown gave £50 apiece to start a building fund for Pembroke Hall in honor of Gray. It accumulated to a large amount — enough to rebuild the college a hundred years later.[15]

More important, however, is Mason's edition of Gray, with the famous *Memoirs*, a book interesting in itself and a landmark in the history of biography. Walpole wrote asking whether he might print it at the Strawberry Hill press[16]; but the offer was declined. Mason wished to make a profit from it, a sum that he could devote to charity or at least to some purpose which should "do honor to the memory of Mr. Gray." [17] Walpole took Mason's refusal in very good part, and it is probably from his courteous reply[18] that one may date the close intimacy between them.

For Mason, 1772 was a busy year. His *Animadversions on the Present Government of York Lunatic Asylum*, although of slight interest for either style or content, shows the range of his interests, and reminds us that he was zealously attending to his duties both at Aston and at York; and was, moreover, still journeying at stated intervals to Kensington to fulfill his duties as chaplain to George III.

During this year also appeared the first edition of Book I of *The English Garden*, a didactic poem in four parts. The last three appeared respectively in 1777, 1779, and 1781. In 1783 came a new edition with notes by Burgh.[19] Mason described it as "an Episodico-didactico-pathetico-politico-farrago, unlike everything that ever was written or will be written," [20] and verily it is a strange hybrid. The poem had been begun in 1767 shortly after the death of Mason's wife.[21] By Gray's death in 1771, the first two books were almost completed; but Gray seems to have given them a rather step-motherly reception; and Mason did not

[15] *D.N.B.*, *sub* Gray.

[16] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VI, 97-98. Walpole asks also for something of Mason's to print.

[17] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., I, 16. This money, which was Mason's by the will, probably went to the erection of the monument in the Abbey.

[18] *Ibid.*, I, 19-20.

[19] Burgh was an intimate friend of Mason's in Yorkshire. For details concerning this worthy, see Davies, *York Press*, 271-274, 283, 298-301.

[20] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., I, 137.

[21] Mason, *Works*, I, 379.

begin to publish them until after Gray's death.[22]

On Nov. 21, 1772, *Elfrida* was performed at Covent Garden. Athelwold was played by Smith, Edgar by Bensley, Orgar by Clarke, Edwin by Hull, Elfrida by Mrs. Hartley, and Albina by Mrs. Mattocks. It was given twenty-seven times.[23] The play was put on, as Genest says, without the consent or approval of the author, who thought the odes had been "lopt and mangled." Mason does not seem to have witnessed any of the performances. Shortly after the première, he wrote to Walpole from Aston: "I was just going to give you some prudent cautions about your Mother [*The Mysterious Mother,* by Walpole] when I received your congratulations on the rape committed on my illegitimate girl at Covent Garden. Can you seriously think that anything that old fumbler, Dr. Arne,[24] can do to her is likely to come to good, no surely; though little Colman puts his finger in the pye too. Depend on it, if the Play (or Poem, call it what you will) has any success, it is owing to no intrinsic merit of its own, but only from its producing to the eye of the audience, such a strange sight as twenty British virgins. . . . But do you not think it somewhat cavalier in Mr. Colman to do what he has done without any previous intimation of it to me." [25] About the same time, Walpole wrote to Mason: "I have been to see *Elfrida,* don't think it was out of revenge, though it was wretchedly acted and worse set to music. The virgins were so inarticulate that I should have understood them as well if they had sung choruses of Sophocles. Orgar had a broad Irish accent; I thought the first virgin, who is a lusty virago called Miss Millar [?], would have knocked him down, and I hoped she would. Edgar stared at his own crown, and seemed to fear it would tumble off. . . . Still it is very affecting and does admirably for the stage under all these disadvantages." [26]

[22] *Ibid.,* I, 261, 354. But Gray seems to have approved Mason's taste in gardening (Gray *Letters,* Tovey ed., III, 165 etc.), and he liked Southcote's *Paradise* (*ibid.,* I, 147).

[23] Genest, *Eng. Stage,* V, 360.

[24] The famous musician, see *D.N.B.* and Appendix D. He composed incidental music for the play.

[25] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence,* Mitford ed., I, Dec. 1, 1772.

[26] Mitford (I, 100) dates this letter Nov. 19, 1773; but, as there was no performance of *Elfrida* at that time, and as it fits perfectly just one year earlier, I have ventured the transposition.

Elfrida was a considerable success. The king went twice; Garrick was green with jealousy, and floated abroad a rumor that he would have liked to stage the play himself.[27] *The Monthly Review* declared that *Elfrida* "overcame all our common prejudices against the ancient *form* of tragedy, especially against the *Chorus*. Mr. Colman, therefore, deserves praise for introducing on the stage, under his direction, so elegant a performance; and, as a proof of the skill and judgment with which he has endeavored to render it a pleasing exhibition to every class of the spectators, we must add, for the information of our distant Readers, that it hath been received with a much warmer, more general, and more lasting approbation than, perhaps, even the most sanguine admirer of the poem could have expected, from a work which the author never intended for theatrical representation." [28]

It was, moreover, revived. Mrs. Saunders gave it for her "night," March 27, 1773, probably without Mason's consent.[29] On the twenty-third of February, 1779 — Mason's fifty-fourth birthday — it was put on at Covent Garden, "with alterations by the author," [30] and was acted five times.[31] On account of a bad cold, Walpole could not get to see it,[32] although Mason took "more pains in fitting it for the stage" than he did about *Caractacus*.[33] On the fifth of April, 1783, it was again revived at Covent Garden, with Mrs. Younge in the title rôle. Unfortunately, she was "a plain woman"; and she "ought not to have acted Elfrida." [34] On the fourteenth of April, 1785, Mrs. Siddons acted in the title rôle at Drury Lane.[35] Fitzgerald says she did it out of friendship for Mason, and adds that the drama proved "utterly unsuited to the stage." [36] Boaden more probably surmises that the king, who greatly admired the play, had her act it by

[27] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., I, 46.

[28] *Mon. Rev.*, XLVII, 486; Southey, *Common. Bk.*, 4 Ser., 295. Some years later, the *Monthly* (LXXVIII, 177) chose to declare that Mason's dramas received "a cool reception" in representation.

[29] Wilkinson, *Yorkshire Theatres*, I, 165.

[30] See *Mon. Rev.*, LX, 233.

[31] Genest, *Eng. Stage*, VI, 95.

[32] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., I, 335.

[33] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VII, 26, n.

[34] Genest, *Eng. Stage*, VI, 271.

[35] *Ibid.*, VI, 340. In the Shaw Theatre Collection in the Harvard Library, there is a playbill of a Bath production of this play by Mrs. Siddons.

[36] Fitzgerald, *The Kembles*, I, 254.

royal command.[37] Boaden adds that the "effect was heavy, for the dialogue is diffuse and the fable thin." [38] It was brought once more on the stage, on the twenty-fourth of November, 1792, for one night at Covent Garden.[39] As a closet play, moreover, it was much praised. Dr. Johnson, to be sure, said that there were in it "now and then some good imitations of Milton's bad manner"; but Boswell considered it "a noble drama." [40]

It is surprising that Mason published no more plays. Boaden suggests that "the progress of Church preferment made him think it indecent to allow his talent to wander toward the stage." [41] Dibdin declares himself "competent to give an answer to all those who have expressed great astonishment that Mason never wrote a regular tragedy":

> . . . He himself told me, at Aston in Yorkshire, that he had then in his bureau two tragedies, written agreeable to the usage of the English theatre, but that they never should be produced, owing to the trouble and pain he had experienced from the folly and caprice of managers.[42]

Elfrida surely pleased many theatre-goers of the day: its revivals prove it; but the play not only is unfitted technically for the English stage but also is lacking in real vitality; for it is little more than a sentimental parody of Euripidean tragedy.

On the seventeenth of May, 1772, Mason wrote to Walpole asking for assistance in courteously resigning his chaplaincy to the king[43]; and Walpole declared himself very willing to assist in "delivering you from attendance on a court: a station below your sentiments and merit." [44] Mason seems to have been relieved of his post about August, 1772.[45] At the time of resignation, he suggested the following reason to Walpole: "I mean to employ all the time that my frittered days here allow in preparing Mr.

[37] Boaden, *Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons*, 323.
[38] *Ibid.*, 324.
[39] Genest, *Eng. Stage*, VII, 99.
[40] Boswell, *Johnson*, II, 335.
[41] Boaden, *Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons*, 109.
[42] Dibdin, *Eng. Stage*, V, 290, n.
[43] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., I, 25.
[44] *Ibid.*, I, 27.
[45] Mason's *Chronology* says that he resigned his chaplaincy in August, 1773; but it seems hardly likely that it would have taken eighteen months to do so; and, besides, the letters tell us that it had been resigned over three months before the date given in the *Chronology*. Probably, Mitford made an error in transcription, and the actual date is August, 1772.

Gray's papers and my account of them for the press." [46] The more probable explanation, however, is Mason's commencement of the anonymous Chambers satires,[47] which, striking as they did against king and Tory party, were scarcely compatible with the position of Court Chaplain.[48]

In 1773, J. Almon, bookseller, "in Piccadilly," put forth to the world *An Heroic Epistle to Sir William Chambers, Knight, Comptroller General of His Majesty's Works, and Author of a Late Dissertation on Oriental Gardening, Enriched with Explanatory Notes, Chiefly extracted from that Elaborate Performance.* No author's name appeared on the title-page; and the *Preface* gave but scant clue: "This poem was written last summer, immediately after the Publication of Sir William Chambers's *Dissertation*; but the Bookseller, to whom it was offered, declined publishing it, till the town was full. — His reason for this is obvious." His reason was indeed obvious; for the "town" consumed a dozen editions in as many months.

For some years, the authorship of Mason and Walpole[49] was not generally known; and, in consequence, the satires have been attributed to Hayley, to Anstey,[50] to Hall Stevenson,[51] and to John Baynes.[52] Warton, however, soon guessed the truth, and did not hesitate to speak his mind.[53] Mason was moved to write him a misleading letter,[54] in which he offered every proof of innocence

[46] In this connection, see Pinkerton, *Walpoliana,* 90; and Walpole-Mason *Correspondence,* Mitford ed., I, 26.

[47] The post must have been very fruitful of material for satire. In 1771, Mason wrote Gray: "I am much amused at present in living privy to a great court secret known only to myself, the King and about five or six more in the world. . . ." (Gray *Letters,* Tovey ed., III, 312-313.) It proved to be the question of who should be preceptor and who sub-preceptor to the young Prince of Wales. Even earlier (1769), Warton notes that in the cases of Warburton and Mason "politics have entered the sanctuary." (Scott, *Admissions,* III, 530.) In 1777, the loss of the chaplain's income must have been largely made up by Mason's institution in the additional living of Langton-upon-Swale, Yorkshire. (Wooll, *Warton,* 343.)

[48] Pinkerton, *Walpoliana,* 89 *et seq.,* attributed Mason's resignation to the Queen's refusal, on one occasion, to have him read prayers, according to the usual custom. See page 104.

[49] For a discussion of Walpole's hand in the satires, see Chapter XI.

[50] Dobson, A., *Nat. Rev.,* LV, 833.

[51] *Crit. Rev.,* XXI, n. s., 400.

[52] Johnson, *Hist. of Eng. Gard.,* 213-214; Nichols, *Lit. Anecd.,* VIII, 113 *et seq.* See Bibl. A, *sub Arch. Epistle.*

[53] Boswell, *Johnson,* Hill ed., IV, 315.

[54] Mason was careful to mislead Harcourt, Holdernesse, and others. See Chapter XI, *et seq.*

except an absolute denial.[55] Mathias[56] and Anna Seward[57] supposed the satires to be by Mason; but were not certain. In February, 1798, the *St. James's Chronicle* remarked that Mason's authorship "is now known"[58]; Malone, in 1804, felt sure of it[59]; and Chalmers, at the end of his life of Mason, quoted Malone's authority. Norton Nicholls, moreover, affirmed the fact, on the authority of Palgrave, who probably knew.[60]

In 1851, Mitford published the *Correspondence of Walpole and Mason;* and, although the letters are guardedly written,[61] the matter was put past all question. The announcement[62] and the publication[63] of Chambers' book were both noted by Walpole. During August, 1772, the summer when the *Heroic Epistle* was composed,[64] Walpole and Mason were closeted together "at the Black Swan at York."[65] The letters that follow are full of references to the satire; and, after its publication, Walpole detailed to his fellow conspirator all the news of its reception, and all the guesses as to its authorship. Sometimes his letters imply that he knew more than he said; and one, dated March 27, 1773, leaves no room for doubt:

> No soul, as I have heard, has guessed within an hundred miles. I caught at Anstey's name, and I believe contributed to spread that notion. It has been called Temple Luttrell's, and to my infinite honour, mine, Lord Nuneham swears he should think so, if I did not commend it so excessively! oh how very vain I am! . . .

[55] Mant, *Memoirs,* in Thomas Warton, *Works,* I, xix, April 24, 1777.

[56] Mathias, *Pursuits of Lit.,* 15-16.

[57] Seward, Anna, *Letters,* II, 86.

[58] Mitford quotes from the *Chronicle* (Walpole-Mason *Correspondence,* I, xi, n.): "Mr. Mason, it is now known, was the author of the *Heroic Epistle* as we have always suspected. He, in great measure, betrayed himself once at Sir Joshua Reynolds' by saying to his next neighbor: 'Don't you think it very odd Sir Joshua should invite me to meet Sir William Chambers?' Sir William Chambers sat opposite him." Even if authentic, this is hardly indisputable proof.

[59] See note in his ed. of Boswell's *Johnson.* See Napier's ed., III, 401.

[60] Nicholls, *Correspondence,* 40.

[61] This was due to the danger of their being opened in the post. See Walpole-Mason *Correspondence,* Mitford ed., I, 27; *Correspondence of Gray, etc.,* Toynbee ed., II, 224-225; Gray *Letters,* Tovey ed., I, 244 and note. Sedition was a serious thing in the eighteenth century. Only in 1771, Almon had been fined £150 for selling Junius' *Letter to the King.* (See *Gent. Mag.,* XLI, 80 *et seq.*)

[62] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence,* I, 23.

[63] *Ibid.,* I, 26.

[64] See above.

[65] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence,* I, 116.

But now, my dear Sir, as you have tapped this mine of talent, and it runs so richly and easily, for Heaven's and England's sake do not let it rest. You have a vein of irony and satire that the best of causes bleeds for having wanted. Point all your lightenings at that wretch Dalrymple, and yet make him but the footstool to the throne as you made poor simple Chambers.[66]

The rest of the letter is meaningless unless Mason wrote the *Heroic Epistle*; one clause alone speaks for itself: "While you chuse to remain unknown for author of the *Epistle*." A few months later, moreover, Mason, in writing to Walpole, quoted part of the *Heroic Postscript*, "For now, my Muse, your fame is fixed as fate," [67] etc., some months before the piece was actually given to the world!

The *Heroic Postscript* came out in 1774. Several other satires appeared, some by "the author of *The Heroic Epistle*," some by "Malcolm Macgreggor"; but none of them met with the clamorous popularity that the town accorded the first effort. In April, 1776, Walpole wrote Mason a detailed account of the trial of the Duchess of Kingston, which, as he says, might be "indifferently bound up with *State Trials* and the *History of Moll Flanders*." [68] This may be a hint for further satires; for Walpole, in a covert fashion, was constantly making such suggestions. Evidently, Mason's attitude toward the government was no very close secret; for, on November 8, 1776, Frederick Montagu, a friend of Walpole's and "scion of the Sandwich family," wrote Mrs. Delany: "Mason is grumbling in Yorkshire . . . the Bishops are preparing the Form of Prayer for the fast; and, if they are *not careful*, Mason will attack their *lawn sleeves!*" [69] In 1776, Almon brought out an *Ode to Mr. Pinchbeck upon his newly invented patent Candle-Snuffers*, undoubtedly by Mason; and, in the same year, "Pro-Pinchbeck" published *An Answer to the ode from the author*

[66] Walpole *Letters*, Toynbee ed., VIII, 257 *et seq.*

[67] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., I, 103. Mason never wished his secret to become general property; and it is not without reason that, a few years later when Walpole's health seemed to be failing, Mason tried to have his own letters returned to him. (*Harcourt Papers*, VII, 106.) Hotten suggests that Combe assisted Mason in these satires; but I have found nothing to support such a theory. (*Dr. Syntax's Three Tours*, Hotten ed., xii *et seq.*)

[68] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., I, 250.

[69] Delany *Correspondence*, Sec. Ser., II, 276.

of the Heroic Epistle to Sir William Chambers. Cunningham quotes Mason's *Epistle to the Honorable Horace Walpole* (1778) written in defense of the latter against the charge that his neglect had killed Chatterton, and including a few shafts against the government.[70] Walpole professed great pleasure: "Do I not know that a line of yours will preserve me like a fly in amber?" [71] In May, 1779, Walpole wrote "a commentary and notes to Mr. Mason's later poems," i.e., the *Heroic Epistle* and its progeny; but apparently they have been lost.[71a]

In 1777, Mason brought out *An Epistle to Dr. Shebbeare*[72] *to which is added an Ode to Sir Fletcher Norton.*[73] In 1782, came *The Dean and the Squire, a Poetical Eclogue humbly dedicated to Soame Jenyns,* and, in the same year, an *Epistle to Dean Milles,*[74] in which Dr. Johnson was attacked.[75] Most of these occasional, political pieces were published, in 1805, as *The Works of the Author of the Heroic Epistle.*[76] Everyone from king to commoner was marked for Mason's iambics: he attacked the royal love of power and the corruption of Parliament. "His Tory metropolitan fared no better; and when the zealous and loyal prelate Archbishop Markham had inveighed with too much warmth in his primary charge, and at the first place of visitation against 'the detestable character of a factious clergyman,' his precentor, though

[70] Walpole *Letters,* Cunn. ed., VII, 116-119.

[71] *Ibid.,* VII, 126.

[71a] While the present volume was in the press, Professor Whitford of Knox College kindly called my attention to lot No. 285 in *Catalogue No. 436* of the Maggs Brothers, New Bond Street, London: it consists of five of Mason's satires interleaved with profuse MS. notes.

[72] John Shebbeare (1709-1788). In 1758, he was sentenced to a fine, imprisonment, and the pillory for attacking the Whigs and the House of Hanover. With the coming into power of the Tories in the reign of George III, he became a writer for the government, and was pensioned. See *D.N.B.*

[73] Sir Fletcher Norton (1716-89), first Baron Grantley, Speaker of the House of Commons. In a famous speech in the Commons on May 7, 1777, he accused George III of extravagance. The speech caused a "great sensation." See *D.N.B.*

[74] Jeremiah Milles (1714-1784), antiquary. In 1782, he produced an "extravagant" edition of "Rowley," in whose actuality he fully believed. He was refuted by Malone, Tyrwhitt, Warton, and others. See *D.N.B.*

[75] Forster, *Goldsmith,* II, 279, gives the common opinion of Walpole in the Chattertonian controversy. Mason in this *Epistle* defends Walpole in this matter. Milles' quarto edition of Chatterton did much to spread the anti-Walpolian point of view. See also Forbes, *Beattie,* 351, in which Scott, writing to Beattie, questions whether Mason wrote this satire.

[76] This collection did not include the *Archæological Epistle* and some minor satires. See *The Last Journals of Horace Walpole,* II, 193, 249, 252.

by another mouth, answered the charge with more than becoming asperity at the next." [77]

During this period, Mason was very variously engaged. A few quotations will serve to illustrate his broad interests artistic and political. On the third of March, 1775, he wrote Walpole: "Tell Lord Nuneham [Harcourt] that I have finished the translation of Rousseau's *Pigmalion*, which he sent me about three years ago." [78] Somewhat later, Walpole remarked: "As you seem to have given over writing letters, I wish you would draw for me, or etch, but with your variety of talents, perhaps you are making another match between two musical instruments." [79] Mason had, indeed, turned instrument-maker, and produced the celestinette, the music of which Harcourt found "agreeable." [80] On May 18, he was "making an electrical machine." [81] On the thirtieth of June, 1778, Mason wrote enclosing an "opera" which, if Walpole liked, he was to "seal up and send to Mr. Giardini" [82] to set to music. This may be the *Cupid and Psyche* mentioned in *The Biographia Dramatica*, or, more probably, Mason's *Sappho*. On the fourteenth of April, 1777, Mason was reading Pliny on encaustic painting, and trying to ascertain "the precise colors and mode of operation that Protogenes used." [83] At about the same time, Walpole and Mason were interested in a "Delineator," a sort of pin-hole camera. In September, 1778, he has "interleaved our old church Anthem-book in order to write little anecdotes about the composers." [84] By September 19, 1781, he speaks of "perpetual hurry and bustle. Harcourts, Holdernesses, and Conyers for visitors of quality,[85] and of gentry myriads besides. This added to Cathedral business, Justice of the Peace business etc. has kept me in continual ferment." [86]

In May, 1775,[87] Mason published his edition of Gray's poems prefaced by *Memoirs* interspersed with letters, a labor of love upon

[77] *Quart. Rev.*, XI, 379. N. B., this is a Tory magazine. *D.N.B.* (*sub* Markham) calls Markham "a pompous, warm-tempered prelate."

[78] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., I, 171-172.

[79] *Ibid.*, I, 182.

[80] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 311.

[81] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VI, 212-213, n.

[82] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., I, 324.

[83] *Ibid.*, I, 281.

[84] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VII, 252, n.

[85] The intimate relations between Mason and these "visitors of quality" throw considerable light on the social position of the clergy of the day.

[86] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., II, 194. Cf. I, 67.

[87] *Gent. Mag.*, XLV, 244.

which he had been engaged during the five years since Gray's death. He had even followed the tour of the Westmoreland lakes to compare Gray's journal.[88] Mason wrote: "I am certain my notes &c. will create me many enemies; and yet for my life I cannot help writing what I think the truth. Pray is the study of antiquities as useful toward checking a redundancy of truth as of wit? If so, I think that I too must commence antiquarian."[89] For the moment, however, the *Memoirs of Gray* does not seem to have made enough noise in the literary world to satisfy Walpole, who had a faith in the future that was largely fulfilled by the subsequent editions: "and yet if wit, parts, learning, taste, sense, friendship, information, can strike or amuse mankind, must not this work have that effect?"[90] Its avowed imitators were numerous; the most famous, James Boswell in his *Life of Johnson.*

Beginning December 6, 1776, *Caractacus* was performed fourteen times at Covent Garden.[91] Genest thought that Mason's alterations for the stage-production were "very judicious, but not very important."[92] Walpole wrote: "I rather talk of *Caractacus*, I agree that he will not suffer by not being sputtered by Barry, who has lost all his teeth. Covent Garden is rather above Drury Lane in actors, though both sets are exceedingly bad, so bad that I almost wish *Caractacus* was not to appear."[93] Walpole evidently planned to attend,[94] and told Jephson[95] about the performance (or possibly a later one) which he described as a "barbarous exhibition."[96] Leslie says that *Caractacus* did not fill the house[97]; but Garrick wrote to Hannah More: "Mr. Mason's *Caractacus* is not crowded, but men of taste and classical men admire it much"[98]; and *The Monthly Review* gave a laudatory criticism of the production: "that Mr. Mason has been happy in the alterations which he has made in this drama, in order to adapt

[88] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., V, 501.
[89] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., I, 289.
[90] *Ibid.*, I, 104.
[91] Genest, *Eng. Stage*, V, 563. The setting by Arne was a very significant piece of work, as illustrating Mason's views on the allying of poetry and music. See Appendix D.
[92] *Ibid.*
[93] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., I, 264-265.
[94] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VI, 396.
[95] Robert Jephson (1736-1803), dramatist and poet, associate of Johnson, Burke, Garrick, Reynolds, *et al.* See *D.N.B.*
[96] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., VI, 457-458.
[97] Leslie, *Reynolds*, II, 192.
[98] Meakin, *Hannah More*, 99.

it to the English stage, is evident, from the success with which the representation has been attended at Covent Garden. The alterations, however, are not many; but they have been made with judgment by the Author himself; who has dedicated it to his learned friend Dr. Hurd, Bishop of Litchfield and Coventry, in a pretty sonnet, equally worthy of the patron and the poet." [99] *Caractacus* seems to have gone the rounds of the provinces, and was given at York in 1777, with the author's "approbation." [100] It was revived at London on the twenty-second of October, 1778[101]; but Genest does not mention any later performance. It is a better play than *Elfrida*; but its stage history was not so long — perhaps because its Sentimentalism was not so crass and therefore less fitted to contemporary taste.

In 1777, Mason was engaged in a law-suit against the Scotch bookseller Murray, because the latter had appropriated some lines of Gray's from Mason's edition.[102] The suit was not actuated by any real desire to recover damages, for the Queen Anne Act allowed only a penny a sheet, and Murray offered reparation; but Mason wished, once and for all, to establish a precedent to safeguard English copyright from Scotch piracies.[103] The suit seems to have been successful; and Mason was mentioned in Parliament in a debate "about literary property" [104] and gained a jibe from "Peter Pindar" in his *Poetical, Supplicating, Modest and Affecting Epistle to the Reviewers* (1778). Mason's views on copyright were widely advertised, and doubtless kept the booksellers from reprinting any of his poems in the collection for which Johnson supplied the biographies: it was for this reason, I fancy, that Mason was not included in *The Lives of the Poets*.

This decade saw the end of Mason's relations with that "very mediocre man," Lord Holdernesse. Gray had not liked him[105]; and, at times, Mason was not on good terms with him.[106] In

[99] *Mon. Rev.*, LVI, 66.
[100] Davies, *York Press*, 280.
[101] Genest, *Eng. Stage*, VI, 87.
[102] A very one-sided account of the affair is given in Smiles. See an article on English copyright in the eighteenth century by the present author in *M.L.N.*, XXXVI, 146 *et seq.*
[103] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VI, 437, n. See also 454, n., and 464.
[104] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., I, 289.
[105] Gray-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., 410.
[106] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VI, 51 etc.

1775, he sold his Aston estate to Mr. Verelst,[107] a distant cousin of Mason's who had made a fortune in India. A large part of the property was sold in small parcels; and Mason wrote querulously to Walpole about his trouble in arranging and regulating the tithes.[108] So Holdernesse removed himself from Mason's vicinity. Three years later, he died. Under the date of May 18, 1778, Walpole entered in his *Last Journals*: "Died, Robert Darcy, Earl of Holdernesse, aged sixty. This was the second person to whom the King had long promised a Garter, who died without receiving it." [109] And on July the first of that year, Mason, writing to Walpole, mentions having said the funeral service over his dead patron at Wentworth Castle.[110]

On November twelfth, 1779, Mason wrote to Walpole that, at Lady Holdernesse's request, he had lent Lady Conyers his parsonage to reside in, while Mr. Byron, father of the poet and husband of Lady Conyers, was raising recruits at Sheffield and Rotherham. "This was," said Mason, "by no means a pleasant sacrifice to make on my part, but I fancy you will think with me that, as Lady Holdernesse asked it, I could not decently refuse."[111] One wonders in what condition Mason found his house after my lady's tenancy.

Beside his other labors, Mason was at work, during the latter years of the decade, upon a new drama *Sappho* and upon a translation of Dufresnoy's *De Arte Graphica.* Walpole criticized the play, objected to the expression "heart-felt" as having "a German sound," [112] and thought "requiem" anachronistic. By July, 1778, it was almost finished; and Mason said it satisfied him better than his own things usually did.[113] He destined the proceeds for a charitable purpose[114]; and, although he was dubious as to the propriety of a cleric's indulging in dramatic composition, he later submitted the piece to be set by Giardini.[115] The translation of *De Arte Graphica,* he described to Walpole in November, 1779: "I am at present revising and correcting a verse translation of Fres-

[107] See Appendix C.
[108] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence,* Mitford ed., I, 214. See also 164.
[109] Walpole, *Last Journals,* II, 175.
[110] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence,* Mitford ed., I, 385.
[111] Walpole *Letters,* Cunn. ed., VII, 262, n.
[112] *Ibid.,* VI, 22-23.
[113] *Ibid.,* VII, 86.
[114] *Ibid.,* VI, 26.
[115] *Ibid.,* VII, 107.

noy's *Art of Painting* which I began when I was a boy at the University, and have since, at intervals of five and sometimes ten years proceeded upon. I believe I shall now complete it. . . ."[116] Walpole praised Mason's knowledge of painting as better than Dufresnoy's, but would have preferred to see him at satire: ". . . you will no doubt improve a middling good poem, and what then?"[117] Mason kept at the work; and it was finally published in 1783 with notes by Sir Joshua Reynolds. It was perhaps a further compliment to Mason's artistic interests that Mrs. Delany, in her will, left him a copy of "Sacharissa's portrait," after Vandyke.[118]

The satires that Mason published were not the only evidence of his political activity. After finding that they had but little actual effect upon the Tory government, he turned to other means. Parliamentary reform became the main plank of his platform, and the "York Association," his main instrument. Mason's interest in a movement that struck at the root of Walpole's income is perhaps one reason for the coolness that shortly arose between them, and finally resulted in their break over Fox's India Bill. The charge has been made that Walpole and Mason hailed each new party in power and then, when their demands for patronage and preferment were refused, turned and berated them roundly.[119] The case against Mason does not seem strong; and his interest in the reform of Parliament and of sinecures implies that he was not a mere office-seeker. Personal reasons also, however, may have caused his opposition[120]: he had good right to consider himself quite as fitted for a bishopric as most of the episcopal bench[121]; the Ministry, moreover, did not always treat him well in other respects; and the Premier, having once asked him to write an inscription to General

[116] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VII, 263, n.

[117] *Ibid.*, VII, 276.

[118] Delany *Correspondence*, Sec. Ser., III, 487, and Forbes, *Life of Beattie*, 242.

[119] Croker believes, and with some reason, that Walpole's politics and prejudices are largely to be accounted for on the basis of his income which was derived from five sinecures, valued at over £6,000 a year. See *Quart. Rev.*, XXVII, 197; LXXII, 516; LXXVII, 253; LXXXIX, 143 etc.

[120] See, for example, Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, 67, 74, etc. Mason was not always in the opposition, nor was he always a consistent Whig. See Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VII, 68, n.

[121] He had, moreover, good reason to expect a bishopric, for it was usual to prefer Royal Chaplains. Queen Anne had preferred all of hers except Dr. Charlett (*Crit. Rev.*, I, 570).

Wolfe, had failed to take any notice of it.[122] At any rate, whether the motive was partly personal or not, Mason, as early as 1779, espoused the cause of a people's parliament.

The Wilkes affair, dragging along year after year, had opened men's eyes to the oligarchic nature of the Commons; and, even in 1769, Sir George Saville presided at "a very respectable meeting of the freeholders of this county to consult upon the properest method of securing the right of election." [123] But the voice of discontent was not loud until the growing burdens and uncertainties of the American war had weakened the Tory power. On April 24, 1778, Mason, writing to Lord Harcourt, suggested that Whitehead set his next annual *Ode to Royalty* to the tune of the *Black Sanctus*. Mason supplies an example:

1st.

Thou whom we yearly celebrate
In Birthday Odes right delicate,
And loyally do execrate
Yankees that scorn thy royal state.

2nd.

Now thou has lost America,
Mind what thy subjects sing and say,
The tax on servants to take away,
And that on houses too, we pray, etc.

Burgoyne's use of Indians against the Americans aroused his special ire in 1777[124]; and, about the same time, he wrote with indignation to Walpole on the Ministry's sudden attack on France:

I will say nothing about our naval skirmish nor our land preparation, except that our poor country from being once a well bred gentleman is now turned a downright blackguard. A gentleman when he has received an affront, sends his challenge and then fights his duel. A blackguard in similar circumstances, drives his fist directly at the jowl of his adversary and war is the ceremonial of challenge. I leave you to make the application, only I protest that had Keppel been victorious, I should have

[122] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 41-42.
[123] *Gent. Mag.*, XXXIX, 483 *et seq.*
[124] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., I, 312.

hesitated about ringing the three crack'd bells in my country steeple, for I can never think a fair victory can be gained over an enemy before war has been declared.[125]

By December seventh, 1779, ". . . there are wheels in motion toward bringing this large county together to a general meeting" to discuss reform. This measure, says Mason, "arises entirely from a set of private, independent gentlemen, without any lordly leader whatever. Its object will be to consider the critical state of our landed property &c., and to petition and perhaps remonstrate accordingly." [126] Later appears an account of the meeting: Smelt[127] spoke for the king; but the resolutions passed almost without a dissenting vote.[128] As an evidence of the widening breach in the Walpole-Mason friendship, one notices that Walpole made fun of the Wyvill *Manifesto* which resulted from the meeting.[129] Walpole, in his *Last Journals*, summarized his view of the whole matter:

> Mutiny at York of independent gentlemen (chiefly stirred up by Mr. Mason) for petitioning House of Commons to give no more taxes till reductions of expenses and sinecure places &c., which gave too much influence to the Crown. Lord Rockingham and other Lords had no hand in this, but would go down to it, though pains taken to stop them: however, they were thanked by the meeting; and a committee was appointed to correspond with other places, and then adjourn to Easter, but Committee was to continue sitting.[130]

The tone also of this entry marks the growing coolness between the two; and, as early as June eighth, 1778, Mason apparently was not always taking Walpole's words quite at their face value.[131] Somewhat later, Mason wrote to Harcourt that Walpole was "in a slight fit of gout" in London; and so he had "some hopes of escaping a visit to Strawberry (a truly Xtian hope)." [132]

This decade was probably Mason's busiest, and so perhaps deserves the title of his "prime"; but, aside from the Murray liti-

[125] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., Aug. 14, 1778, II, 9.

[126] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VII, 288, n.

[127] See Bibl. A, *sub* Smelt. He was an extreme Tory. See numerous references in Walpole.

[128] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., II, 60.

[129] *Ibid.*, II, 73.

[130] Walpole, *Last Journals*, II, 260. For valuable notes, cf. Almon, *Bibliographical Anecdotes*, III, 362 *et seq.*

[131] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 58.

[132] *Ibid.*, VII, 61.

gation and the York meeting in 1779, all his major activities were encompassed within his self-wrought æsthetic, or pseudo-æsthetic, world. Gray died and Walpole took his place. Mason revised *Elfrida* and *Caractacus*, wrote *The English Garden*, the *Memoirs of Gray*, *Sappho*, the Dufresnoy translation, and the series of satires tinkered into being with the help of Walpole. We hear of Mason the artist, Mason the musician; but the only times that he emerged from his "ivory tower" — except on those everyday occasions when his clerical functions demanded — are when he resigned his chaplaincy to the king (surely a minor matter), when he battled in the court for author's copyright, and when he moiled politely with some "independent gentlemen" of Yorkshire to raise a local tempest in the political teapot.

The 1770's and early 1780's show some momentary subsidence in the Romantic wave of literature. The dictatorship of Johnson and the importance of his circle which was dominated chiefly by a sort of rationalized Neo-classicalism, constituted a strong influence. The return to power of the Tories, moreover, brought back the old theories of Church, State, and Society; and for the moment discredited Deists, Methodists, Reformers, Sentimentalists, and the intellectual allies of Romanticism. The American War also turned the public attention to sterner things than the cultivation of the emotions through the fine arts. Mason, the true barometer of his age, to some extent reflects this reaction. One may suppose that this change was partly occasioned by the substitution of Walpole's influence for Gray's; but certain it is that his most Neo-classical works, his satires, form an important part of this period; and Neo-classical elements are very apparent in *The English Garden* and in the *Memoirs of Gray*. Mason was not sufficiently deep-rooted intellectually to hold very firmly to principles, literary or otherwise, in opposition to the spirit of the age; and, with an unconscious ease, he naturally shifted his sails to any wind that blew.

CHAPTER VI

MASON'S DECLINING YEARS: 1780-1790

THE decade of the 1780's I have chosen to entitle *Mason's Declining Years*, not because his bodily vigor was so much impaired or his mental perception dimmed, but rather because, in the less comfortable days of the eighteenth century, old age, even among the clergy, the longest-lived of the professions, usually set in by a man's sixtieth birthday. Mason, although his eyesight and teeth seem to have given him trouble, was still a fairly robust man of affairs; and, although he largely gave up the effort of writing, we still hear of his alighting from his coach at any one of the four corners of England. His life had long since worn its proper channel, and continued to flow as usual, but with lessening stream. Old age, albeit a green old age, came upon Mason slowly and rested with the grace of a thing that appears in the gradual course of nature. The period is marked by a diversity of interests, some, like his connection with the York Association, matters of vital concern, but most of them the outgrowth of the merest dilettante interest in things-in-general, or the chance events of a life very busy if not very serious.

Walpole in his *Last Journals* defines the political power and status of the York Association at the very opening of the decade: "Lord Rockingham [one of the great Whig leaders] certainly disliked the Association, which he had not been able to form. He had sent down another petition which they had rejected. Mr. Wyenill [Wyvill], an opulent clergyman, and Mr. Mason, the poet, had been chief promoters of the petition, and were not at all disposed to be governed by Lord Rockingham. In the meantime, the Court meditated a dissolution of Parliament; and one reason was, the Tories were afraid of losing their popularity and elections if they rejected the popular questions." [1] On the twenty-first of February, a sort of test case came up in Sir George Saville's "motion for list of pensions" and Lord North's amendments. After

[1] Walpole, *Last Journals*, II, 273-274.

a violent debate which descended to personalities: "At one in the morning, many Tories having absented themselves, Lord North's Amendments were carried by a majority of *only two votes*, 188 to 186 which [says Walpole] was equal to defeat."

By the spring of 1780, the effort of the County Associations to reform Parliament and abolish royal sinecures had almost spent itself for the moment; and, on May 20, Mason, disappointed, wrote to Walpole: "The Whigs love wallowing in their mire full as much as the Tories. There then I leave them, and sit myself in patient expectation of the Millennium of Despotism, for nothing now can save us but what the people will never have the spirit to resolve upon: I don't mean a civil war, but a civil and pacific resolution not to pay any taxes: for instance, an exciseman comes to demand my post-chaise tax; I suffer him to bear home on his shoulders my pianoforte, and so on, preserving all the while a Quakerlike nonchalance. How do you like my system? I know you dislike it, because you would sooner be taxed ten shillings in a pound than part with Cardinal Wolsey's hat or Harry the VIII's Clock-Weight; but I, God be thanked, leave no such valuable personalities." [2] Imagine Walpole, or even Mason, actually allowing his cherished possessions to be borne off upon the aching shoulders of the exciseman! Truly Mason was heroic to suggest the experiment's being tried on his own beloved pianoforte. Suppose the collectors had added his silver and his wine-cellar; and suppose that the Holdernesses or the Harcourts had at that moment stepped down from their coaches at his door, bent on a visit of state: verily the laughter of the gods would have shaken Olympus! Indeed Walpole never followed Mason's panacea—nor did Mason himself.

Mason's gloom, however, does not seem to have been justified; for, in October, he "drove Mr. Lascelles out of his seat for Yorkshire," and Montagu declared that Mason was "at the height of all human felicity." [3]

By the following January (1781), Walpole assured his correspondent that the York Association had "wandered from the national cause to a county quarrel"[4]; by December of that year,

[2] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VII, 362-363, n.

[3] Delany *Correspondence*, Sec. Ser., II, 565.

[4] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., II, 139.

he felt sure it would only "sub-divide our calamities and our disunion and heal neither"[5]; and by March, Wyvill lacked "common-sense."[6] Mason, however, still cherished tender feelings for the project. "I am sorry," he wrote, "that you and I retain different sentiments concerning the *only* political measure in which I ever publicly concerned myself. However, I perceive you have candor enough to think, that whatever I have done or may do in that matter proceeds from an upright intention. I mean to go to York in Easter week to our next committee meeting."[7] Just what Mason's ideas of parliamentary reform were at this time can be gleaned from the following passage: "Take away venal boroughs from one House and Bishops and Scotch Peers, (their votes at least) from the other, and then there will be no occasion either for more knights or more peers: and so ends my catechism."[8]

Mason, we may suppose, went up to York during Lent; and, in April, he sent Walpole a copy of "our resolutions."[9] The Committee met again in October, and the entire Association came together late in December, to watch the action of Parliament.[10] Walpole, in his *Last Journals*, called Mason "the real instigator" of the whole effort, and looked upon it as a political auxiliary to the platform of William Pitt, to whom Mason "had offered incense" in an *Ode*.[11] In fact, in March, 1785, the *Gentleman's Magazine* published a letter of Wyvill's dated the previous December, a document "frequently cited in debates," in which Pitt promised to support parliamentary reform at the earliest possible time in the next session of Parliament.[12] Meanwhile, meetings and speech-making continued until the French Revolution reminded the reformers that there were dangers as well as advantages in popular government.[13]

By January, 1785, Mason was disgusted with the whole business,[14] had no opinion of "that blessed pair Fox and Burke," and

[5] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., II, 211.

[6] *Ibid.*, II, 234.

[7] *Ibid.*, II, 245.

[8] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VIII, 202, n. The Association occasioned some pamphleteering, in which Mason may have been a collaborator. See Davies, *York Press*, 285 *et seq.*

[9] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., II, 260.

[10] Walpole, *Last Journals*, II, 469.

[11] *Ibid.*, II, 490.

[12] *Gent. Mag.*, LV, 164. Wyvill writes that he is "authorized by Mr. Pitt" to make the declaration.

[13] Eg.: *Account of Proceedings . . . Held on the 10th of February, 1785, York: printed by A. Ward in Coney-Street.*

[14] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 102.

used not very clerical language to describe Parliament.[15] Walpole, who had found him too liberal, or at least too *something*, in the Association, was soon to find him not liberal enough. In 1784, Mason had commended Lord Harcourt's reconciliation with the Court,[16] and demanded that Lady Jersey take a similar step. Did Mason, at this late date, aspire to preferment? to the laureateship, perhaps, or to a bishop's mitre? His *nolo episcopari* had always been a little too conspicuous to be indubitably convincing.[17] Perhaps he was merely reacting from the failure of the Association; or perhaps it was Lord Harcourt's example, or merely the natural conservatism of age. After 1784, politics played a slight part in Mason's life. He took an interest in passing events, but attempted not even an odd satire. The evidence that has come down to us of his opinions during these years is rather fragmentary. In 1788, he was glad Pitt kept England out of the war against revolutionary France.[18] By December, he was not sure of Pitt's continuance in office, and trembled for his country.[19] The following year, he was clearly a "king's friend," i.e., friendly to the Ministry, and declared against "that wretch, Burke," [20] whose *Reflections on the French Revolution* were not apparently to his taste. In 1791, he was sure "the salvation of this country, under heaven, rested upon his [Pitt's] single shoulders." [21] The next year, although Mason rejoiced in being neither "a Demagogue nor an Aristocrat," [22] he found Aston rather "too near Sheffield where sedition seemed to be at a greater height than ever." [23] Like many other English liberals of the day, including Pitt himself,[24] Mason, in 1792, was becoming distrustful of the French Revolution; but he remained to the end basically a liberal and a Whig — in spite of the "sedition" at Sheffield. The Tory reaction in England put off for many decades the measures that he championed; but the Reform Bills[25] of the early '30's were a belated triumph for the far-sighted policy of Pitt in the 1780's and for the humbler activity of such men as Wyvill and Mason.

[15] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 83-84.
[16] *Ibid.*, VII, 91-92.
[17] Eg., Polwhele, *Traditions and Recollections*, I, 220 *et seq.* Cf. the present work, Chapter IV, note 12 and 42; and V, note 121.
[18] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 138.
[19] *Ibid.*, VII, 146-148.
[20] *Ibid.*, VII, 153.
[21] *Ibid.*, VII, 187.
[22] *Ibid.*, VII, 196.
[23] *Ibid.*, VII, 199.
[24] Pitt's attitude changed in May, 1792.
[25] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 196.

During the early '80's, Mason busied himself with many odd things. In April, 1782, he was trying, through Walpole's influence with the Duke of Richmond, to have his brother-in-law made Storekeeper to the garrison at Hull,[26] an arrangement which finally relieved him of the support of a needy relative. In November, he was constructing a drain for the house of the canons residentiary at York.[27] In the fall of 1784, he was writing an inscription on Harcourt's gardener recently dead — then he decided that Whitehead's verses had more pathos; and, as if to show that his own soul was not overburdened with gloom at the sad event, discoursed upon his "delectable puppy," newly acquired for Miss Fauquier.[28] He constantly wrote to the noble lord advice about arranging his garden; and, in the winter of 1789, he defined his own doings: "I am versifying the Book of Job; contriving a flue somewhat less expensive than your stove to warm my rectorial pew; inventing a new species of yeast to lighten my bread. . . ." [29] The invention of the yeast seems to have been something of note; for, in November, 1789, Mason journeyed to London to get from the Society of Arts a premium for his invention.[30] *The Annual Register*[31] reprinted from the Society's *Transactions*, two letters by Mason telling the new method. The Society gave £20 to Mason's servant Senyor "to whom the discovery was first owing," and voted its thanks to Mason. This journey all the way to London to make sure of a bounty for his servant is one of the occasional kindly acts that sweeten Mason's somewhat acid later years. Mason had long been a member of the Society of Arts. The *Transactions* list him as a "perpetual member" in 1786; and ten years before, he had been voted a silver medal for drawings.[32]

This decade of Mason's life is of particular interest because Mason, for the first time, came into personal relationship with Johnson. Johnson's opinion of Mason seems to have been unequivocal to a fault. Mrs. Piozzi supplies the following anecdote: ". . . I have heard him at other times relate how he used to sit in some coffee-house there, and turn Mason's *Caractacus* into

[26] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VIII, 201, n.
[27] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 78-79.
[28] *Ibid.*, VII, 98.
[29] *Ibid.*, VII, 154.
[30] *Ibid.*, VII, 168-169.
[31] *Ann. Reg.*, 1790, 88 *et seq.*, and 1801, 463 *et seq.*
[32] *The Transactions*, II, 128.

ridicule for the diversion of himself and of chance comers in. 'The Elf—da (says he) was too exquisitely pretty; I could make no fun out of that.' When upon some occasions he would express his astonishment that he should have an enemy in the world, while he had been doing nothing but good to his neighbors, I used to make him recollect these circumstances: 'Why child (said he), what harm could that do the fellow: I always thought very well of Mason for a *Cambridge* man: he is, I believe, a mighty blameless character.' " [33]

The dislike of Johnson, Mason had inherited largely from Gray, who had always been temperamentally estranged from "*ursa major*"; and Johnson's injudicious essay in *The Lives of the Poets*, had not bettered his relations with Mason. In May, 1782, Anna Seward probably made matters worse by her *Verses to the Reverend William Mason*, "on Mason's silence respecting Dr. Johnson's unjust criticism of Mr. Gray's Works." [34] During this same year, Mason wrote his anonymous *Archæological Epistle* in which Johnson was bitterly attacked for his treatment of Gray.

From this mutual dislike, however, in 1783, somehow arose "a literary coalition" with the object of administering the Blue Stocking Club without the direction of Mrs. Montagu.[35] Mason told Walpole all about it:

> I have gone a great way toward founding a literary coalition with Dr. Johnson: our object is no less than the complete administration of the Blue Stocking Club,[36] which we mean to govern in a truly constitutional way, without any concurrence from Madam Montagu. All our arrangements are not finally settled; Cumberland will not come into our plans, unless I give him my word and honor that I will write prologues to all the plays he has now on the stocks, or shall have on the stocks. Hard terms these are, I believe I shall have public spirit enough to accede to them.[37]

Just what this alliance signified or what Mason meant it to signify, is hard to say; for Johnson's death, within a twelvemonth, broke it up — unless, indeed, it came to grief even sooner. The foregoing letter was written from York, March 5, 1783; on the

[33] Piozzi, *Johnson*, 37-38.

[34] See Seward, *Works*, II, 179. This was published, according to Miss Seward's note, in 1783.

[35] Williams, *Cumberland*, 197.

[36] See Wheeler, *Famous Blue Stockings*, 61, 76, etc.

[37] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VIII, 324, n.; and see *Mrs. Montagu* (letters) ed. Blunt, II, 140 *et seq.*

ninth of August, Mason was attending a house-party at "Weymouth or rather Melcombe Regis": ". . . we are to expect Mrs. Thrale, who, as our imaginations tell us, is to bring hither the Colossus of Literature, Dr. Johnson." In that case, Mason intended to bide—but, if the meeting took place, history has allowed it to fall into a regrettable eclipse.

Mason's note of the possible arrival of Johnson does not suggest that any real friendship had sprung up between them; and his remarks to Boswell, chronicled in a letter to Lord Harcourt, show scant love for the memory of the "Colossus":

> December 26, 1785, York . . . Yesterday, the dull uniformity of my residentiary dinners was *strangely* enlivened by the company of that redoubted bear-leader, Mr. James Boswell. Burgh was of the party, and a more ridiculous *conversationi* never passed either at Mrs. Montagu's or Mrs. Vesey's. I began by telling him that I exhibited a striking specimen of Christian charity in giving him a dinner after his ill usage of me. He was all astonishment, and pleaded innocence. I then explain'd myself by telling him I was never once mentioned in his book, and that I thought the abuse of Dr. Johnson wch I was certain I could not have fail'd to have been honor'd with upon various occasions, was the thing I of all others most *ambitioned*, and that therefore if he did not take care to shew the world that I was one of those whom his friend the Dr. most despised, he would do me an injury with posterity.
>
> He promised he would make me ample amends in his life, and that he had materials for the purpose quite sufficient. I begged that he would insert them all, and on his promise to do so the business amicably concluded.[38]

This sounds a little as if Mason were very anxious for any mention — no matter what. One is not surprised to find another authority quoting Mason as nicknaming Johnson "that bear on stilts,"[39] a phrase that has its sting of appositeness.

Three years later in his *Memoirs of Whitehead*, Mason went out of his way to speak his mind of Johnson; and, not without a pretty wit, described Johnsonian critical prose as the "acid eructations of vituperative criticism, which are generated by unconcocted taste and intellectual indigestion."[40] Thereupon, Mason was called to account for his "Abuse of the Late Dr. Samuel Johnson":

[38] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 110-111.

[39] Hayley, *Memoirs*, I, 275.

[40] Whitehead, *Works*, III, 129—a good burlesque of Johnson's earlier, sesquipedalian manner.

While *Johnson* spoke, poor Mason's wrath was dumb,
But Johnson silenc'd, prattles o'er his tomb.
Thus, at some eagle slain, once frighted crows,
With dastard vengeance aim their puny blows.
Mason! what wreath shall grace that critic's head,
Who fear'd the living, but insults the dead? [41]

During the early eighties, the Walpole-Mason letters grow less and less frequent; and finally, about the middle of the decade, they cease altogether. In 1782, Walpole was still pursuing Mason for a contribution to the Strawberry Hill Press, on this occasion to be published with Lady Harcourt's poems and an *Ode* by the Duchess of Devonshire[42]; but, as usual, nothing was forthcoming. Mason was, however, most grateful for Walpole's "Historico-politico-letterario-Gazettes"[43]; but, in spite of these polite interchanges, the tone of both correspondents grows colder. Political difference undoubtedly lay at the root of this separation; and, indeed, it must be borne in mind that the relationship of the two men had always been a literary-political alliance rather than a friendship. Mitford says that both were Whigs; and asserts that the republicanism of France was hailed with enthusiasm by Walpole, whereas Mason received it in a more conservative spirit.[44] In *Walpoliana*, there is published among other papers of the sort, a letter of Walpole's which may well be reproduced in this connection:

I shall tell you a great secret, the cause of my late difference with Mr. Mason [1785]. Lord H[arcourt], Mason and I, used often to meet together, as we cordially agreed in our sentiments of the public measures pursued during this reign. But when the India bill of Fox came to be agitated,[45] Mason took a decided part against it; nay, wrote me that, upon this occasion, every one ought to assist the King; and warmly recommended me to use my influence in that cause.

You may imagine I was a little surprised at this new style of my old friend, and the impertinence of his giving his advice unasked. I returned a light, ironical answer. As Mason had, in a sermon preached before

[41] *Asylum for Fugitive Pieces*, ed. 1792, III, 253. In the second line, the author shows a fine *nonchalance* of syntactical coherence, doubtless due to the influence of Latin in which the inflection would show the syntax.

[42] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VIII, 155.

[43] *Ibid.*, VII, 411, n.

[44] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, I, xiv. During the '80's, Mason approved of revolutionary France quite as much as did Walpole.

[45] Walpole approved of this bill. See his letter to Mann, Dec. 2, 1783. Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VIII, 436-438.

the Archbishop of York, publicly declared that he would not accept a bishopric, if offered to him, I jeeringly told him that I supposed his antipathy to a bishopric had subsided. He being also the first promoter of the York Associations (which I never approved), I added that I supposed he intended to use that fool W[yvil] as a tool of popularity. For W[yvil] is so stupid that he cannot even write English; and the first York Association paper, which is written by W[yvil], is neither sense nor grammar.

Walpoliana goes on to tell that Lord Harcourt, at Mason's suggestion probably, went against the India Bill, and that he was therefore asked to become Ambassador to Spain, a dignity which he refused. His wife, however, got preferment. Mason asked Walpole what he thought about it, and the latter "returned a pretty severe answer," [46] and hinted, rather unkindly, that Mason was supporting Pitt's ministry in the hope of a bishopric.[47] "The consequence of these differences," wrote Walpole, "has been, that we call on each other, but are on the coldest terms."

> Mason too has turned courtier, though he was formerly so noted, that, being one of the King's chaplains, and it being his turn to preach before the royal family, the Queen ordered another to perform the office. But when the substitute began to read prayers, Mason also began the same service. He did not say whether he proceeded; but this I had from his mouth. . . . Mason in consequence [?] resigned the chaplainship.
>
> Mason has six or eight hundred a year arising from a living to which he was presented by the Earl of Holdernesse, and from his York prebend. In my last letter to him, I asked if supernumerary church-offices were not among the articles of Mr. Pitt's reform? [48]

This last shaft, although poisoned with some of the venom of truth, is not altogether well-founded. Mason did indeed uphold parliamentary reform and the taking away of sinecures; but his own busy pastoral life scarcely places him in the class of those who held sinecures.

Mason sincerely regretted the break, and to Lord Harcourt admits himself "sadly at a loss for news since I lost my strawberry-

[46] For this letter, see Walpole's *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VIII, 453 *et seq.*

[47] Evidently the satirist of the *Poetical Miscellany* (1787), shared Walpole's view: Mason is made to address the younger Pitt: "Give not the Mitre now!" etc. This poem purports, ironically enough, to be a translation of Pindar (*Isthm. Ode* 2).

[48] Pinkerton, 89 *et seq.* Pinkerton is not a very trustworthy witness, but he seems right in the general outline of this matter. See Bibl. B.

hill evening post"; but soon the noble lord took Walpole's place as gossip-in-ordinary to Aston; and Mason referred to Walpole's letters as "of that spitfire sort," and to Walpole as "my wine-merchant," [49] perhaps because he stowed the new wine of court gossip into the old bottles of his epistolary style. Walpole seems to have meditated a reconciliation shortly after the break,[50] but he did nothing. Finally, in 1796, just before the death of both, Mason renewed the correspondence. That Mason, meanwhile, did not, as Walpole had expected, betray the Whig cause to the king, is evident from his political opinions as already quoted in this chapter; and, indeed, the following anecdote may serve to point the matter more completely. At the ball of the officers of the Welsh Fusileers at which "all Windsor and almost all Berkshire assembled," Lord Harcourt showed Madame D'Arblay "a new medallion just presented him by the Queen . . . 'though,' he added, 'I am a very singular courtier, for I have been one hitherto without either profits or honors.'

"Not so *singular*, thought I; for whoever makes a speech such as that, is in secret waiting for both. I asked him in a line of his favorite Mason, if he meant to 'weave the light dance in festive freedom gay'? 'No,' he said; but this opened to much talk upon his friend, who is pretty avowedly *no courtier at all.*" [51]

Thus ended the Walpole friendship, after some fifteen years of intimacy. Whether any very deep personal attraction ever really cemented it together is subject to question. It always bore a little too conspicuously the hallmarks of mutual congratulation; and it always chiefly concerned itself with things political. To Walpole, Mason seems to have been, especially toward the end, merely a convenient person, who was presumably keeping his excellently written letters in a safe place for future publication; for Walpole apparently lived with the idea of springing a vast posthumous trap to ensnare in a torrent of witty criticism all the notables of his day who failed to live up to the ideals (such as they were) that he had set for them.[52]

[49] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 101 *et seq.*

[50] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VIII, 460 *et seq.*

[51] D'Arblay, IV, 278. Italics are hers.

[52] Why Walpole corresponded so assiduously with Mann has sometimes been queried. May it not have been the same motive that, I believe, kept him writing Mason his spicy gossip, even when gout made it torture to hold a pen?

In 1785, the laureateship became vacant; and *The Monthly Review*[53] was unkind enough to reprint *An Epistle* [probably by Polwhele] *From the Rev. William M—n to the Right Hon. William Pitt . . . petitioning for the vacant Laureatship.* The *Review* had the grace to add that the satirist had failed to "hit the style and manner" of Mason. Richard Tickell, furthermore, and his fellow-wits of the *Shakespeare*, waggishly ascribed to Mason one of their *Probationary Odes.*[54] A dozen or more "poets" of the day (including Mason) are represented as assembling at the Lord Chamberlain's office "on Wednesday last," each to recite a specimen of his work and to apply for the vacant honor. "Mr. Mason, having laid aside the more noble subject for a Probationary Ode, viz., the Parliamentary Reform, upon finding that the Rev. Mr. Wyvill had already made considerable progress in it, has adopted the following. — The argument is simple and interesting, adapted either to the harp of *Pindar* or the reed of *Theocritus*, and as proper for the 4th of June, as any day in the year. . . ."

Irregular Ode

O! green-robed Goddess of the hallow'd shade,
Daughter of Jove, to whom of yore
Thee, lovely Maid, Latona bore,
Chaste virgin, Empress of the silent glade;
Where shall I woo thee? — Ere the dawn,
While still the dewy tissue of the lawn
Quivering spangles to the eye,
And fills the soul with nature's harmony!
Or, 'mid the murky grove's monastic night,
The tangling network of the woodbine's gloom,
Each zephyr pregnant with perfume,—
Or near the delving dale, or mossy mountain's height.

And so the *Ode* discourses most eloquent nothings, ranging from Endymion to Oxford, from Friar Bacon, Minerva, and "Professor, Chancellor or Dean" to a final conclusion in which it suddenly remembers to wish George III many happy returns of the day. Mason defended the office of laureate in his *Memoirs of Whitehead* published in 1788[55]; but whether he had actually wished lau-

[53] *Mon. Rev.*, June, 1785, LXXII, 467-468.

[54] *Probationary Odes*, 30. See Bibl. A.

[55] Whitehead, *Works*, III, 92-93.

reation is hard to say. Although the Whigs were in power, his past relations with the king would hardly lead him to expect the office.

Mason's publications during this decade were neither extensive nor significant. His political Muse still composed a few satires, now fallen for the most part to the rank of squibs. Mitford owned a number of these "which Walpole used to insert for him in the *Evening Post*. . . . Those against the king were written in the bitterest feeling of personal animosity." As early as 1775, Mason had celebrated the occasion when the Court decided to "procure by money an Address to the King from the Jacobites of Manchester, advising him to prosecute the war."[56] In 1781, Mason sent a letter to be anonymously inserted in *The London Courant*, in which he vainly tried to tease the Archbishop of York to lead the Association in opposing the American War.[57] In 1779, he had come out with a serious *Ode to the Naval Officers of Great Britain*, and in 1782 with an *Ode to Pitt*,[58] in both of which he announced his political creed; and, in the later year, published *The Dean and the Squire*, the last satire of the Chambers series. Mason himself, however, did not escape the retort direct: Soame Jenyns, a member of the Board of Trade who amused himself with writings on every topic from *The Art of Dancing* to *Internal Evidences of the Christian Religion*, committed to print in 1780 a *Burlesque Ode* attacking Mason and Gray.[59] Walpole urged retaliation; but Mason was too busy with other things to take up cudgels against Jenyns. In the same year, Cumberland, Walpole tells us, "has written a *labored* and *elegant drama*, which by title I conclude it to be very comical, and more like to endanger the celebrity of Aristophanes than of any living wight. It is called *The Widow of Delphi, or the Descent of the Deities*, and I am told is to demolish the reputation of *Caractacus*."[60] Apparently, the production of this "labored and elegant" affair did not keep Cumberland from asking Mason for prologues a year or two later, when Mason and Johnson were trying to dominate the Blue Stocking Club. Not all of the Masoniana of the period, however, were

[56] Walpole, *Last Journals*, I, 474.

[57] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VIII, 85, 86, 87.

[58] See *Gent. Mag.*, review of this, LII, 340-341.

[59] See *British Poets*, 1803, XXXII, 114.

[60] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VII, 323.

satirical; for, in 1780, Eliza Ryves published an *Ode to Mason*, which was favorably reviewed by the *Monthly*.[61]

Meanwhile, Mason seems to have been putting the last touches to his West Indian tragedy.[62] By January, 1781, he has left his translation of Dufresnoy "in the hands of Sir Joshua Reynolds who is to write notes on it." [63] He thanked Walpole for his good opinion, explained that he has much improved it since Gray and Hurd advised him not to publish it, and that Sir Joshua's notes constituted his chief motive for giving it to the world. It came out early in 1783.[64] A short time after, he sent my Lord Harcourt a new Welsh elegy with strict injunctions to show it to no one — injunctions that may have meant to show it to everyone. In December, 1786, he wrote a graceful sonnet to the Earls of Jersey and Harcourt in appreciation of their long patronage of Whitehead[65]; and, in 1788, an inscription to Whitehead himself, three quatrains of which, slightly altered, were lettered on the cenotaph to his memory in the garden at Nuneham.[66]

On January 27, 1788,[67] Mason preached an anti-slavery sermon in York Cathedral, on the text: " . . . for we also are his offspring"[68]; and, shortly after, it was printed at the request of the Lord Mayor and the Corporation of York.[69] The sermon lacks the force of concrete detail[70]: a criticism that Mason is bound to admit in his "few and hastily written pages." [71] Chalmers and Singer call Mason one of the first anti-slavery agitators; he was indeed, like Cowper, one of a rather early group that voiced a protest against the traffic in the latter '80's; he was a friend of Wilberforce[72] and of Bishop Porteus,[73] and brought the former to York as early as 1784[74]; but he was neither the earliest[75] nor the most important of the agitators.

[61] *Mon. Rev.*, LXIII, 149.
[62] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 92.
[63] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VII, 492.
[64] See Bibl. A, *sub* Dufresnoy.
[65] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 123.
[66] *Ibid.*, III, 148.
[67] *Works*, IV, 176.
[68] *Acts*, XVII, 28.
[69] *Works*, IV, 176.
[70] Cf. *Mon. Rev.*, LXXVII, 270.
[71] *Works*, IV, 188-189, n.
[72] See Wilberforce, I, 220-221, 335, 339. Mason entertained a "paternal feeling" toward Wilberforce (I, 327) and seems to have contributed toward his prominence.
[73] Wilberforce, I, 219.
[74] *Ibid.*, I, 53.
[75] According to Beattie (Forbes, *Life of Beattie*, 445), "the first who drew public attention" to the condition of the slaves in the British West Indies was James Ramsay of Teston in his *Essay*, London, 1784, and in later pamphlets. See also James Tobin, *Cursory Remarks*, London, 1785.

One aspect of the 1780's remains to be noticed: Mason's busy social life; for this was the period, above all, of Mason's blossoming forth among the high and mighty of England. He had his coach for visiting in the grand manner; for entertaining, he had the rectory at Aston; and at York, he might occupy a house as canon or might sojourn in the deanery[76]; in London, he lived on Curzon Street; and, in various parts of England, his many friends received him gladly as a guest. Thus, even though Mason never complied with the urgings of Walpole to come to live in London,[77] he saw a good share of the people who were worth seeing and being seen by. Polwhele describes the Aston establishment with considerable vividness: "He may, with great truth be said to be the successor of Pope in the elegancy of his retirement, and the respectability of his connections. He has about £1,500 per annum to live upon and one third of this, I am informed, he devotes to patronage and charity. He keeps a regular table of two courses, which is open to all his friends who visit him, without waiting for the formality of an invitation." [78] After an extended eulogy of Mason's character and attainments, Polwhele gives the following account of a week at Aston: "You would have been highly delighted had you spent the week with us. We constituted among us a little academy of the Arts and Sciences. In one corner of the library, his curate was constructing a dial; in another, Mr. H. was copying a head of Addison, which Mr. Mason intended as a present to the Bishop of Worcester; in a third was your friend, placed at the pianoforte, correcting some of Mr. M's productions; and lastly there was he himself sitting pensively, 'bodying forth the forms of things unknown.' . . . We conversed much upon poetry; and particularly upon Dryden."

The pen of Mrs. Siddons gives us a picture of Mason abroad upon a visit: "When I was on my usual visit to this beautiful place [Nuneham], I have often walked arm-in-arm with the author of *Caractacus*, and the amiable Whitehead. The former of these gentlemen, before I made his acquaintance, had conceived an inveterate dislike to me: he was a great humorist[79]; but with all

[76] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VIII, 193, n.

[77] *Ibid.*, VIII, 374-375.

[78] Polwhele, *Traditions and Recollections*, I, 221.

[79] I.e., given to indulging his whims or humors.

his oddities, a benevolent man. He was petted and coaxed by Lord Harcourt, and by all the visitors, indeed, like a spoilt child. He hated me because he could not bear that I should be even compared with his departed friend and favorite Mrs. Pritchard; and was so annoyed at the sound of my name, that, in order playfully to humor his prejudice, they sunk it, and always in his hearing called me 'the Lady.' I arrived there at tea-time, and found him looking very sulky indeed, wrapped up in his Spanish cloak, which he called being out of humor. We happened somehow to be near each other at supper. I found his ice beginning to thaw; and the next morning, to the great amusement of the whole party, we were detected practising a duet in the breakfast-room. From that time forth, I had the honor of being in his good graces, for the too short period of his pious and valuable existence. When I arrived at his own habitation, on a visit for a few days, they told us he was absent, but would soon return. In the meantime, Mr. Siddons and I strolled to see him; and when we entered, we saw the venerable man, the almost adored parish priest, in the organ-loft, teaching the children some music for the next Sunday. We left him undisturbed in his pious occupation, and returned to his house where he soon received us with heartfelt cordiality. He spoke broad Yorkshire, and good-naturedly allowed us to accuse him of affectation in so doing; though I believe he was only affecting what was so natural to him that he could not avoid it." [80] Mason must have come to have a considerable regard for the great actress: at any rate, in June, 1786, when he heard that she was to be at York, he hoped that she might come to visit him at Aston.[81]

He was on intimate terms with Sir Joshua Reynolds, and, at the latter's death in 1792, received a very valuable "Miniature of Milton by Cooper." [82] With Romney also, he was acquainted; and, in his house in Cavendish Square, Mason saw Hayley who found him "shaken . . . by age and disappointments, and soured in his temper." [83] Hayley's *Essay upon Epic Poetry*, which appeared in 1782, is dedicated, with a eulogy, to Mason, who responded with a polite letter. In 1787, Mason wrote to Sir Samuel Romilly, condoling the death of one Baynes, a youth

[80] Fitzgerald, *The Kembles*, I, 252-253.
[81] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 118-119.
[82] Prior, *Malone*, 192-194. See also Davies, *York Press*, 301.
[83] Hayley, *Memoirs*, I, 275-276.

seemingly of great promise,[84] perhaps the same Baynes who had carried the *Archæological Epistle* to the printer's. Mason knew that famous court diarist, Mrs. Delany; he quarrelled with her over his radicalism, and was reconciled in 1784 through the kindly offices of Mrs. Boscawen.[85] Frederick Montagu, of Sandwich connection, and a friend of Walpole's, heard that "our poetical friend," Mason, was present at Nuneham on one occasion when the king came to visit there. He wrote Mrs. Delany in hot haste for gossip; for it will be remembered that Mason was not an over-zealous subject. "*Did he say grace?* Did he repeat verses? Did he read prayers? *Or what did he do?* If one was *wicked enough*, an excellent account might be given of *what functions* he perform'd at Nuneham! Could not you get your friend Mr. Smelt [preceptor of the Prince of Wales and pet aversion of Mason's] to write it?"[86] Indeed "an excellent account might be given"! but, in default of any such, we can only imagine what Mason may have said or done. George III could not quite have forgotten the Chambers satires that made him lose his temper; and the situation, from the point of view of the hostess, must have been rather difficult.

To both Walpole and Harcourt, Mason furnished vignettes of life at Aston during these years. To the former, in the autumn of 1781, he speaks of "Harcourts, Holdernesses, and Conyers for visitors of quality, and of gentry myriads besides," and of the "Cathedral business, Justice of Peace business etc."[87] From his bucolic "hurry and bustle," we turn to a winter scene which shows eighteenth-century country-life in colors far brighter than the London wits of the period were inclined to use in painting it. To Harcourt, he writes in the early spring of 1783: ". . . I find myself very comfortable here, tho' the snow has been in the air and on the ground ever since I came, and I have been able only to walk once around *my place* since I came hither. But I keep excellent fires, & Dixon, my curate, and a young Cantab, who is a sort of *élève* of mine, make a very comfortable Partie Quarée. We seldom speak to one another but at meals; they read,

[84] Romilly, *Memoirs*, Sept. 15, 1787, I, 335.
[85] Delany *Correspondence*, Sec. Ser., III, 232.
[86] *Ibid.*, III, 235.
[87] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, II, 194.

& I correct Sternhold & Hopkins in the evening, and daub all morning. I have erected my new organ, wch answers *au mieux*, but I dare not print my new Psalms lest Bishop Birch should deem it an innovation & therefore I am correcting old Sternhold just to take out his vulgarity, & make him passable, wch, as the Company Stationers have done it before me, I think cannot fall under ecclesiastical censure." [88] The "Dixon" mentioned is probably the husband of Mason's half-sister.[89] On June 23, 1786, Mason was visiting him at Oddington where he seems to have been rector, vicar, or curate.[90] Mason must have made his little rectory a cheerful place and a source of culture and enlightenment to the surrounding country. The dilettantism of the eighteenth century may have been sophomoric, but it was also a very necessary civilizing influence.

Mason seems to have been known on the Continent as well as in England. The French and Italian translations of his works attest this; but, apparently, he was known also as a personality. Texte, in his monumental work on French-English literary relations in the eighteenth century, remarks after speaking of Bonstetten's famous sojourn at Cambridge with Gray: ". . . Fontanes, on a visit to London in 1786, made the acquaintance of Mason, Gray's biographer, and learnt from him a few details concerning one who was among his favorite poets." [91] The glimpse of Mason moving in the intellectual society of London, sought after by the distinguished foreigner as the biographer of Gray, Mason hobnobbing with scions of the most ancient houses of Britain: all this fits into the picture of his social biography.

A final word may well be added upon one last matter, trivial but perhaps picturesque. Early in 1787, Mason was having his poetic Chair of State, his "*sedes beata*" redone. It was originally intended as a copy of York Cathedral Chair, and he had promised to bequeath it to Courtnay Castle; but now, alas, it looked too modern. Creature comforts, we may judge, had dictated that he add to its former Mediæval asceticism, "a stuffed back"; and the flesh pots of Aston had suggested the comforts of a black and crimson velvet cushion. The arms and legs, moreover, had

[88] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 83.
[89] See Appendix C, and Gray-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., 20, n.
[90] *Harcourt Papers*, VIII, 120.
[91] Texte, *Rousseau*, 303.

been "ornamented," doubtless in authentic—eighteenth-century—"Gothic" style.[92] Mitford notes that this "poetical chair" was "kindly bequeathed" to him; and he adds ". . . I have left it by will to the Poet Laureate of the day [Tennyson?], that it may rest among the sacred brotherhood."[93] Austin Dobson impishly expresses the hope that the Laureate may not inherit through the chair any of the dullness that desiccated the verses of its original possessor.

The Mason of the 1780's is a man a little on the shady side of life, but still vigorous, and still somewhat embroiled in affairs, political, ecclesiastical, poetical. He wanted parliamentary reform; perhaps he wanted a bishopric and a laureateship: at any rate, he intrigued to be one of the joint powers of the Blue Stocking Club. But the whimsies of age — or, better, the whimsies of youth never outgrown — manifested themselves occasionally in a sub-acid petulance with Mrs. Siddons, with Walpole, with the king, and at times, one may suppose, with Mr. Precentor's curate and housekeeper. But withal, Mason is a fascinating person: everyone came to visit him; and he coached it all over England to the country-seats of his friends of quality. He could write a polite letter to Walpole with a nicely turned eighteenth-century compliment; or he could disport himself with Harcourt in epistolary bald pate and shirtsleeves. Everybody petted him, laughed a little at his prejudices and oddities, and liked him no whit the less. He had the charm that belongs to a singular, if minor, personality, in an age when personal charm was highly prized and when it was a man's ambition to be "an ornament to society." These latter years are notably lacking in greatness of any sort; but they give the biographer a certain genial pleasure to contemplate, a pleasure such as Mason himself must have dispensed with his spice of occasional sharpness and his general air of Pickwickian benevolence, so characteristic of that age that was preparing itself for Liberty, Fraternity, and Equality.

[92] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 124-127. [93] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 317, n.

CHAPTER VII

MASON'S LAST YEARS: 1790-1797

THE last seven years of Mason's life nearly filled out the final decade of the eighteenth century. They present few salient features, and seem chiefly a coda consisting of the old themes repeated *diminuendo*. They contain few single acts of significance: the '50's were marked by plays and odes; the '60's, by his married life; the '70's, by his *English Garden*, his satires, and his *Memoirs of Gray;* the '80's, by the York Association; the '90's, by a growing quiescence. He felt old age coming on, and voluntarily limited his activities, resting upon such laurels as he had won. The French Revolution passed with comparatively little effect upon his life; for he had reached the time when a man reacts with decreasing intensity to the present. Neo-classical polish and grace were being rapidly discarded by the Romantic spirit of revolt; but Mason, sheltered in England, was still, in most regards, the Mason of the 1770's.

He was growing too old to stand the rigors of a very active life in an age when communications were uncertain and travelling often dangerous. In January, 1790, he "actually" had a fit of the gout[1] — Walpole's old complaint — in spite of his boasting but a little while before: "I now take short journeys on horseback (indeed I do)!"[2] When the eighteenth-century country gentleman gave up his horse, it was commonly a sign for his health to grow wheezy under the dietetic strain of red roast beef, rich port, and no exercise. Only the active in body can inherit the fruits of good living — and not succumb to dyspepsia or gout. In June, "poor Tom Warton" died; and Mason began keenly to feel his own advancing years; but there were still some who suspected he had designs upon the laureateship — and it was not even London this time which said so, but York; for the London of Burke and Fox and the Younger Pitt, the London that would soon flock to Coleridge's lectures and shake its head over Wordsworth's rustici-

[1] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 170. [2] *Ibid.*, VII, 142.

ties, London was already forgetting Mason. Of the laureateship, he wrote to Harcourt: "Yet, disregardless of my feelings, the wits of York (or rather, as I suspect, that greatest of Scotch wits, Dr. Hunter) have told the opposition wits who support the York Herald, that I, the Precentor of York, am the competitor with Mr. Kemble, of Drury Lane Theatre, for the vacant Laurel." [3] Mason added that he thought the laureateship should be discontinued as "a wretched Gothic institution." One wonders whether the laureate who inherited Mason's *sedes beata*, ever read this opinion of his venerable office, and whether Mason had forgotten his own defense of it in his *Memoirs of Whitehead*. An uncharitable biographer might suggest that Mason wrote to his lordship in this strain as a gentle hint that the position would be an appropriate and acceptable gift. If Mason harbored such a sentiment, he could not have been very keenly disappointed at its failure of fulfillment; for surely his failing strength would have made the added duties, however light, seem burdensome. In the fall of the same year, 1790, he found himself too old "to take any more southern vagaries." [4] His teeth seem to have given him trouble; and his failing eyesight had long been a trial. He did, however, still travel occasionally, if for nothing else, to escape this "dullest of lives" at York.[5] "I feel old age coming upon me with hasty strides . . ." he writes; and, in a day when the medical profession was far less advanced than at present, he might well, even at sixty-five, begin to look with concern into the future.

Perhaps a word more should be said of Mason's political opinions during the last decade. The problem of classifying him is best solved by Madame D'Arblay's description of him as "for the *sovereign* — the *government*, and yet, palpably, not for George the Third nor for William Pitt"[6]; for Pitt was turning Tory. Mason was in the peculiar position of a liberal Whig, somewhat shaken in his liberalism by the extremes of such radicals as Godwin and Holcroft. His anomalous political status is characteristic of many Whigs during the 1790's: they favored Liberalism and reform, but, at the same time, feared Radicalism and Revolution.

[3] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 178.
[4] *Ibid.*, VIII, 351. See also VII, 181.
[5] *Ibid.*, VII, 180.
[6] D'Arblay, *Diary*, V, 307. Mason had certainly been favorable to Pitt a few years earlier.

The Tory Madame D'Arblay credited Mason with a "season of democracy"[7]; but any Liberalism would seem "democracy" to a friend of George III. She wrote of it in her *Diary*: "Lord Harcourt, the Queen's new Master of the Horse, spent a week here, and made me a very long visit one day, in which we discussed the merits of Mr. Mason, Mrs. Macaulay, and divers republicans with tolerable ease for courtiers! He [Harcourt] was of late a chief of their clan. I was not surprised to hear afterwards from Lady Harcourt, that they had not received a letter from Mr. Mason for the last three months; yet she told it as a matter of wonder."[8]

However this epistolary hiatus may have happened, Mason, by July, 1791, was writing the Countess to express his congratulations on the elevation of her brother to the See of Carlisle. He asks in return, congratulations on *not* getting preferment.[9] His conspicuous way of putting it suggests that, if my lord could have obtained for him some like gift from the royal hand, he might not have been backward in acceptance. But in that age, as in every other before and since, modesty and self-effacement have not commonly gained the reward of the good things of this world. If Mason, in his clerical angling, was no better than many another, at least he was no worse. In about March, 1794,[10] he wrote a *Palinodia*[11] in which he anathemizes "abhorr'd Democracy" with bell, book, and candle; but he is still Whig enough to offer incense to the Revolution of 1688. Sonnet XIII further emphasized his conservative reaction. His was hardly a growth in loyalty, but rather a revulsion against anarchy, partly occasioned by the events of the times, and partly by the natural conservatism of old age.

Of writing, during these days, he did less than ever; and, indeed, the republishing of his *Poems*, with some additions, in 1796-7, is the chief literary event of the period. Anna Seward, in 1796, learned "with regret, that Mr. Mason is going to print a new work of his by a private press [probably at York — surely not Walpole's!], for his friends only." This resolve, doubtless, resulted, she says, "from disgust at the idea of seeing his compositions subject to the ignorance and effrontery of Review-impertinence. . . ."[12]

[7] D'Arblay, *Diary*, V, 309.
[8] *Ibid.*, IV, 415.
[9] *Harcourt Papers*, VIII, 349 *et seq.*
[10] *Works*, I, 78.
[11] *Works*, I, 78.
[12] Seward, *Letters*, IV, 229.

The work in question may have been his *Ode* on Job, XXVIII,[13] privately printed, or his *Religio Clerici*, which appeared in 1796. He wrote two or three new odes of no especial merit,[14] sonnets on each of his last three birthdays, two against "the present taste in English Gardens," one to Hurd, and one against Epicureanism.[15] From this period also date at least one of his *Inscriptions*,[16] and at least one of his *Metrical Versions of the Psalms*.[17] Mason, moreover, seems to have contributed "half a dozen ballads" to Hannah More's *Cheap Repository for Religious and Moral Tracts*.[18] What Warburton's ecclesiastical monitions had failed to do, advancing age gently accomplished: Mason committed to publication fewer and fewer of his "scribbles." What he did publish forms a strange survival: in the midst of the Revolution, he is still eulogizing Gray, depreciating Johnson, and discussing Rowley and landscape gardening.[19] Indeed, one is not surprised that he was accused of writing himself "out of all credit." [20]

Age was a thing that Mason took seriously. There is a story of a man who advertised that he was to pass away on a certain day, arranged for the coffin and a handsome funeral, assembled his friends — and then neglected to die. In some such fashion, Mason wrote to Harcourt of his new system: he is going to wean himself "from Town & the polite circles of wch it is composed, & this on account of certain symptom of old age." [21] His monastic seclusion did not apparently include letter-writing in its plan of hours; for, about 1792, Mason solemnly ended the Harcourt correspondence — at least as now published — with the following characteristic postscript, which presupposes that he will at least receive, if not answer, letters: "Let me beg your Lordship to wrap up your next letter wch you honor me with in a decent English parallelogram mode, & not in that awkward French square, wch, however French, is the very way wch English tradesmen have

[13] *Works*, I, 87, and Kilvert, *Hurd*, 246.

[14] *Works*, I, 56, 63, 78.

[15] *Works*, I, 128 *et seq.*

[16] *Inscription X, Under a Picture of the Editor of Shakespeare's Manuscripts* [Ireland?], dated 1796, *Works*, I, 146.

[17] *Psalm LIX* is dated July, 1795, *Works*, I, 482.

[18] Meakin, *Hannah More*, 316-317. I have seen about a dozen "parts" of this series containing several unsigned "hymns" that may have been written by Mason — and at least one that certainly was not, "Jesus shall reign where'er the sun."

[19] See *Works*, I, 132 *et seq.*

[20] Potter to Jerningam, Bettany, *Jerningham*, 353, 357.

[21] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 185 *et seq.*

follow'd time immemorial." [22] Even at this time, Mason had just been teaching a new "disciple" — thirteen years old! — to paint in his method "of four colors." [23] The semi-authoritative *Quarterly Review* spoke of his later years at Aston "where the exercise of hospitality and charity, together with a growing spirit of devotion, shed a calm and tranquil light over his closing days. . . ." [24] In November, 1796, he had not quite yet given up travelling — if we may credit the testimony of Polwhele: "I must inform you, that Mason, the father of modern poets, has lately been in my neighborhood [Cheshire?]; but, alas! that eye that was wont to 'glance from Earth to Heaven, from Heaven to Earth,' is now dimmed by age and infirmities. The silken cord is almost broken. He was, however, tolerably cheerful, and able to pursue his journey into Worcestershire, to visit his old College friend, the venerable Hurd!" [25] Mason at the time does not seem to have been struck especially with his own physical decay; for, in February, 1797, only a few weeks before his death, he wrote a birthday sonnet in which he thanks the Almighty for his good health at the age of seventy-two.[26]

But one more event of Mason's life remains to be chronicled: the reconciliation with Walpole. Mason made the first overtures: he asked Walpole to join him in a pamphlet war on R. Payne Knight, author of *The Landscape*, who had attacked Gray: Walpole replied that he was "rejoiced" to see Mason's handwriting again, but he excused himself on the ground of old age.[27] Mason proposed writing a sonnet[28]; Walpole urged satire as a keener weapon, and wished him godspeed. Within a year, Walpole died. In March, 1797, Mason wrote to his old friend Stonehewer: "I don't wonder that Lord Orford's [Walpole's] death was not known to Mr. Montagu, for, strange to say, it was not published in the *Sun* (a paper he probably takes in), so that I did not know it till the day before I received yours of the 7th, when he was mentioned as the late Lord Orford having left 1,000£ to the Duchess of Gloucester. As to his Will, it is full as rational a

[22] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 201.
[23] *Ibid.*, VII, 192.
[24] *Quart. Rev.*, XV, 379.
[25] Polwhele, *Traditions and Recollections*, II, 437.
[26] See *N. and Q.*, Sec. Ser., VI, 166, 197; also Mason's sonnet, *Works*, I, 131.
[27] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., IX, 461.
[28] Sonnet XIII, *Works*, I, 134, is probably the one.

one as anybody had reason to expect, and as to the bequest of his papers, the Miss B[erry]s, or others are the fittest to have them. I would not demean myself, or any of my friends, to solicit for my own letters &c., so I let the subject rest." [29] Why Mason would not "demean" himself, is hard to say. Did he want the fact of the authorship of the Chambers satires to be rediscussed? Perhaps he expected some little fame from the Misses Berry's book — or, more likely, he did not very much care.

The letter to Stonehewer, just quoted, was written the tenth of March; early in the following April, Mason died. His death occurred at his Aston rectory, from "a mortification occasioned by breaking his shin in stepping from his carriage[30] two days before." [31] Hannah More was "much affected." "The Bishop of London," she says, "was just reading us a sonnet he [Mason] had sent him on his seventy-second birth-day, rejoicing in his unimpared strength and faculties; it ended with saying that he had still a Muse able to praise his Saviour and his God, — when the account of his death came." [32] Anna Seward grew quite eloquent in her effervescent fashion: "So Mason is no more! We should exclaim, 'mourn all ye muses,' if he had died ere he published his recent volume,[33] exhibiting amongst some poetic beauties, mortifying proof, on the whole, of genius chilled, and of judgement enfeebled by time." Surely Mason had begun to out-live his fame; but personal friendship still honored him: Mrs. West wrote an *Elegy* in praise of his "ever-during page"[34]; Mathias composed fourteen lines to his memory[35]; and *The Monthly Review* of August, 1797,[36] published an elegy "worthy of the poet to whose memory it is consecrated." This piece, however, as evidenced by its climax stanza, seems almost as much concerned with Gray, Milton, Thomson, and

[29] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., IX, 464, n.

[30] Hunter (*Doncaster*, II, 169) says he had just been visiting "the accomplished and amiable brothers at Langold."

[31] *Gent. Mag.*, LXVI, 359. This notice with the short life, discussed in Chapter I, appeared in the March number, which must, therefore, have gone to press rather late in April. The 1813 *Life* and Kilvert's *Hurd* (246-247) date his death April 5th; Chalmers and Singer favor the seventh. Kilvert is probably right.

[32] Roberts, *Hannah More*, II, 14.

[33] Probably his poems of 1797, in which there was considerable new material of inferior quality.

[34] Mrs. West, *Poems and Plays*, I, 153 *et seq.*

[35] Mathias, *Pursuits of Lit.*, 358-359, 360.

[36] *Mon. Rev.*, XXIII, n. s., 456.

Cowper, as with the deceased Mason. His friend Gisborne[37] also wrote an Elegy which appeared in his *Poems Sacred and Moral*; and in 1802, Dr. Darwin of Botanical fame, wrote an *Inscription for the Monument of Mason.*[38] Those near him, his domestics, his ecclesiastical subordinates, respected and loved him. Polwhele and Southey both quote from a letter written shortly after his death, by "one who visited York": "The Verger who showed us the Minster at York, upon my inquiring of him concerning Mason, began an encomium upon him in an humble way, indeed, but more honorable than all the factitious praises of learned ostentation." [39]

In a note to the Gray-Mason letters, Mitford says: "Mason's landed property was bequeathed to Mr. William Dixon, son of his half-sister Anne Dixon, wife of Rev. Henry Dixon, Vicar of Wadsworth, Yorkshire. Gray says it was considerable. See letter to Nichols Feb. 3, 1768." [40] This is not strictly true: Hunter, for once, is probably right in his more precise explanation: "Mr. Mason gave by will his real estates to trustees, for the use of William and James Dixon, sons of Ann Dixon, his half-sister, wife of Henry Dixon, the vicar of Wadsworth. He next gives to Richard Stonehewer, esq., auditor of his majesty's office of excise,[41] 'all the manuscript books and papers remaining unpublished, with his and my correspondence, which came to me by will of Thomas Gray, esq.' and all the other Gray *souvenirs*, books MSS. etc." He gave legacies to his friends and servants, and instructions to William Burgh,[42] together with his three trustees, Stonehewer, the Rev. Christopher Alderson,[43] rector of Eckington,

[37] N. B. It is very difficult to keep separate Thomas Gisborne, Fellow of St. Johns, Cambridge, B.A. 1747, M.A. 1751, M.D. 1758, an eminent London physician of Mason's day; and his contemporary, the Rev. Thomas Gisborne, M.A., curate of Benton-under-Needwood, author of "Principles of Moral Philosophy." See Kilvert, *Hurd*, 169-170, nn., and *D.N.B.* Mason and Gray undoubtedly knew the former, and possibly the latter also. See Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 170, n., and D'Arblay, *Diary*, IV, 416.

[38] *The Poetical Register and Repository for Fugitive Poetry* for 1801, London, 1802, I, 139.

[39] Southey, *The Doctor*, IV, 276; and Polwhele, *Traditions and Recollections*, 494-495.

[40] Gray-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., 20.

[41] Stonehewer often appears in Gray's correspondence. He died January 30, 1809, and willed the Gray relics to Pembroke College.

[42] See *Quart. Rev.*, XV, 380. Burgh, a Yorkshire friend of Mason's, annotated *The English Garden*. He was, moreover, a friend of the banker-poet, Rogers: see Clayden, *Early Life of Samuel Rogers*.

[43] Alderson had been for many years his curate, and finally succeeded him as rector at Aston.

and the Rev. John Dixon, rector of Broughton in Northamptonshire, to revise and publish any of his MSS. they saw fit in a new complete edition of his works.[44] After legacies to charities, he concluded with setting his hand and seal, April 29, 1794, "after recommending my soul to Almighty God as into the hands of a faithful Creator, and humbly imploring the remission of my sins through the merit of his blessed son Jesus Christ, my Redeemer, in divine union with the Father and Holy Spirit." Alderson erected a medallion to Mason in the Gray temple and a monument in All Saints at Aston.[45] In his preface, Mitford gives an interesting note as to the fate of the Mason-Walpole letters: "The letters of Mason, now first printed, formed part of the Collection of Manuscripts purchased of the Duke of Grafton, as executor of the late Earl of Waldegrave,[46] and were entrusted to me for publication; and, while I was lamenting the imperfect manner in which they would appear, from want of the answers of the correspondent, my friend Archdeacon Burney informed me that the corresponding letters of Walpole were carefully and in their entire form, preserved at the Rectory House at Aston. The Introduction which I obtained from him was most kindly r'c'd by Mr. Alderson, the present possessor of the place." [47]

Mason was buried in the church at Aston.[48] Allen tells of the two memorials: "In the church is a marble tablet (with a profile bust) erected to his memory by the Rev. C. Alderson, his successor; in a summer house in the rectory garden, on the ceiling is an embossed medallion, containing profiles of himself and his friend Gray, and on the floor stand two urns and pedestals, inscribed to Gray and Mason." [49] In 1800, moreover, a tablet in Westminster Abbey near Gray's, was erected to his memory, and inscribed:

Optimo Viro
Gulielmo Mason, A.M.
Poetae
Si quis Alius
Culto, casto, pio,
Sacrum.

[44] The result was the standard *Works* of 1811.
[45] Hunter, *Doncaster*, II, 169.
[46] See Walpole, *Last Journals*, many references in the index, especially I, xxiii.
[47] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., I, vii.
[48] Hunter, *Doncaster*, II, 169.
[49] Allen, *Hist. Co. York*, V, 232.

The inscription was written by Bishop Hurd[50] "at the request of his [Mason's] executors"; and the monument is by "the elder Bacon," R.A.[51] In his *Commonplace Book*, Hurd was moved to write the following quatrain "on hearing that a good medallion of Mr. Mason had been put up in Westminster Abbey":

> What sculpture could achieve we here behold:
> The Poet's feature is express'd in stone;
> In his own polish'd verse, the rest is told,
> There only may the poet's mind be known.[52]

Lady Harcourt is said by Chalmers to have erected an urn to Mason's memory in the flower garden at Nuneham with an inscription celebrating his "simple manners, piety, and steady friendship."

Prior's *Malone* throws some light on the troubles of Mason's literary executors to find him a fit biographer:

> About two years after the death of Mason, the poet, one of his executors (Rev. John Dixon of Boughton) applied to Malone on the propriety of republishing the translation of Du Fresnoy's *Art of Painting*, which with the notes of Reynolds, had been previously published by the former in his works. This led to further correspondence. Hearing that he knew Lord Orford's executors, the same gentleman requested him to urge on them the return of Mason's letters to his lordship, which the will of that nobleman directed, but which they had applied for in vain. [Mason had failed to apply.] Malone complied, but also failed in his application — from what cause does not appear.
>
> This eventually led (1811) to the project of a Life of Mason. But who was to write it? Few were deemed sufficiently disposed, or in other respects qualified for the office. At length Gifford, the sharp editor of the *Quarterly Review*, was proposed, apparently by Malone; but he declined. Could a fiery Tory do otherwise to a Whig no less fierce? But he had ample excuse. The *Review* was of recent date. All his energies were required to secure contributions from the best writers.[53]

So ends the staid tale of Mason's life. It remains but to make some summary of his characteristics as a social figure, as a priest, and as a personality. Some few anecdotes and fragments remain, moreover, to be gathered in, to reinforce the general impression.

[50] Cf. Wheatley and Cunningham, *London*, III, 477, and Kilvert, *Hurd*, 247-248.

[51] Corbett, *Hist. of Eng. Poetry*, 620.

[52] Cf. Wheatley and Cunningham, *London*, III, 477, and Kilvert, *Hurd*, 247-248.

[53] Prior, *Malone*, 307. Cf. Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, II, 412.

In the eighteenth century — even more perhaps than in some other periods — social position was an all-important matter. It opened or closed opportunities, and circumscribed a man's experiences within a rather well-defined caste-circle. Three sorts of honor were recognized, three occasions for classing oneself above the "swinish multitude": military, legal, and ecclesiastical — in France sharply defined as *la noblesse de l'epée, la noblesse de la robe,* and *l'Église.* Mason and his ancestors distinctly belonged to the last group. The English rector or vicar occupied a peculiarly advantageous position: he could be on easy terms both with the aristocracy and with the poorer classes; he was a sort of intellectual *bourgeois,* a go-between for religious, charitable, and educational purposes. In some respects, especially financially, he was often in a truly sad case; but, if he was blessed with a good income, he was able to sustain the aristocratic side of his position and mingle with ministers and peers.

Mason's social life was exceedingly busy: he was constantly entertaining people of distinction and in return visiting their residences. Sir Leslie Stephen hardly gives a just impression when he says: "Mason, again, fixed himself in his Yorkshire living and his canonry, emerging only at intervals to pay a few visits to his aristocratic friends." [54] English society of the day was so circumscribed that one *could* know almost everyone worth knowing; the inconveniences of hostelries made visiting a necessity for those who travelled, and made inhospitality, at least to one's equals, a social scandal.

Mason's artistic activities naturally brought him into relationships with painters, musicians, and men of letters. This was regularly on a basis of social equality, or even superiority. His intimacy with Gray has elsewhere been discussed. His relations with Walpole were of a politico-literary nature. He knew Twining, the commentator of Aristotle[55]; Lawrence Sterne, the novelist, was a colleague at York Minster in the early '60's, and was surely an acquaintance; Mrs. Pritchard, the actress, was his "friend and

[54] Stephen, *Hours in a Library,* 1909 ed., III, 102.

[55] Twining, *Country Clergyman,* 156-157. Twining's work on Aristotle was highly significant. See an article by the present author, *Aristotelian μίμησις in Eighteenth Century England, P.M.L.A.,* XXXVI, 395 *et seq.*

favorite"[56]; he walked arm in arm with Mrs. Siddons in the gardens at Nuneham, and had her come and visit him in the north "for a few days."[57] Goldsmith accuses Cradock of preferring Mason to him.[58] Professor Mainwaring was one of Mason's friends.[59] Madame D'Arblay, daughter of the celebrated Dr. Burney, says her father was "more pleased with Mr. Mason's approbation [of his *History of Music*] than with anybody's since the Streathamites [the Johnson circle]"[60]; and Mason was one of those "who were accustomed to assemble around their tea-table."[61] In 1760, Mason and Sandby[62] "cook'd up a great picture of M. Snowdon."[63] Both Mason and his wife subscribed to *The Antiquities of Athens* by Stuart and Revett, "the fathers of classical archæology in England," and it appears that Mason applied to Gray for help for the authors.[64] The Rev. William Gilpin asked Mason's advice as to whether he should commit his *Forest Scenery* to print.[65] Mason seems to have been a member of the Dilettanti Society,[66] was a Freemason,[67] and belonged to the Society of Arts.[68] As a poet, moreover, he was quite *à la mode*; and he is often mentioned and his works even quoted among the titled acquaintance of Mrs. Delany.[69]

But not only had Mason's connection with various arts brought him into numerous social relationships, but also his early days at Cambridge, as undergraduate and as fellow, had made him many friends. On his way to London for his waiting upon royalty, he

[56] Fitzgerald, *The Kembles*, 252; Fyvie, *Tragedy Queens*, 239.

[57] *Ibid.*

[58] Cradock, *Memoirs*, 230.

[59] *Ibid.*, 189: apparently a reference to the Rev. John Mainwaring of St. Johns College, Cambridge, author of sermons and a biography of Handel (1760). See *Brit. Mus. Cat.* and Walpole *Letters*, Toynbee ed., XI, 342.

[60] D'Arblay, *Diary*, I, 167; in editing the *Diary* and *Letters*, Austin Dobson has allowed the following inconsistency: one note (I, 167) states that Mason first met Dr. Burney "at Mrs. Cibber's in Scotland Yard"; a later note (III, 388) says it was at Lord Holdernesse's.

[61] D'Arblay, *Diary*, I, 10.

[62] See *D.N.B.*, called the "father of water-color art."

[63] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 168-169, 171.

[64] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 298-299.

[65] Delany *Correspondence*, Sec. Ser., III, 38. See *D.N.B.*, *sub* Gilpin.

[66] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 299, n. In his *Eng. Lit. and Soc. in the 18th Cent.*, Sir Leslie Stephen speaks of it as a valuable stimulus to art.

[67] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VI, 230, n.

[68] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 139. The Society seems to have been concerned more with the useful than the fine arts. Mason appears in the Society's transactions as a perpetual member. He belonged to it from 1760 or earlier until his death.

[69] Delany *Correspondence*, Sec. Ser., II, 444 etc.

often tarried a few days at the university. On January 8, 1768, Gray wrote from Pembroke College:

> Here are, or have been, or will be, all your old and new friends in constant expectation of you at Cambridge; yet Christmas is past, and no Scroddles appears.
>
> Weddell attends your call, and Palgrave, proud,
> Stonehewer the lewd, and Delaval the loud
> For thee does Powell squeeze and Marriot sputter,
> And Glyn cut phizzes, and Tom Neville stutter.
> Brown sees thee sitting on his nose's tip,
> The Widow feels thee in her aching hip,
> For thee fat Nanny sighs, and handy Nelly,
> And Balguy with a bishop in his belly.[70]

Mason had planned to stay with Lord Strathmore's brother; but, two days before his arrival, the chambers burnt down.[71] At Cambridge, Mason met Hurd, Heberden, Birch, Mead, Warburton, and probably Gisborne and Whitehead.[72] In the fall of 1770, Gray again writes of their mutual acquaintances at Cambridge, many of them of a younger generation: he speaks of Wilson, then a Fellow of Pembroke, "good, honest," and "scholar enough"; he speaks of the disappearance of Foljambe, whose Yorkshire estate was near Mason's rectory; he says that "the little Fitzherbert," afterwards Lord St. Helen's, is a pensioner at St. Johns; he mentions the departure of Mason's "élève" Lord Richard Cavendish from college, and refers to Bishop Keene of the new regulations, and to Dr. Heberden, the patron of Mason's juvenile days.[73] The persistency of so many college friendships shows that Mason was considered as a person worth cultivating, and could not have been as unattractive as some recent critics would have us suppose.

But his standing was not merely artistic and academic: in the world of Society he cut a considerable figure — and that, without title, bishopric, or a great fortune. His yearly trips to the south of England were a progress of visits from one noble man-

[70] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 171. Gray's seemingly slurring references to Brown, Balguy, and others should not be taken as casting serious reflection upon them any more than his like references to Mason. On Stonehewer, see Tovey's note.

[71] *Ibid.*, III, 178.

[72] *Ibid.*, II, 256.

[73] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 295–296.

sion to another. Gray found that his friend's "attentions to the Duchess of Norfolk and Sir Conyers [d'Arcy, K.B.]" allowed no time for poetry.[74] Mason visited Prior Park, the Delphi of the Warburtonian cult.[75] In London, he stayed at Lord Delaware's house.[76] He stopped regularly at Popplewick, the seat of Frederick Montagu, Esq., friend of Walpole and scion of the House of Sandwich; also, of course, at Nuneham, at Strawberry Hill, and at Stonehewer's house in Curzon Street.[77] He knew Sir James Gray[78] and Sir Joshua Reynolds. He was intimate with Mrs. Delany until the king's gift to her of a house in Windsor convinced her that Mason's politics were too liberal to suit her augmented loyalty.[79] He paid visits of duty to Lord Holdernesse at Sion Hill[80] and at Hornby Castle.[81] In 1774, Mason and Montagu visited the Dowager-Countess Gower, who regretted the shortness of their stay[82]; and, the next month, the Duchess of Portland entertained them together with Hurd.[83] In the same year, Walpole referred to Mason's "old friend Lord Pelham," and regretted that Mason in his southward journey "was so much in request" that Walpole "was only tantalized."[84] Lord John Cavendish, likewise, was urging Mason "to come and call"[85]; and, in 1783, General Harcourt was "so pressing in his invitation to St. Leonard's Hill," that Mason could not refuse even though he had to set aside the solicitations of Lord and Lady Mount Edgecombe.[86]

Not only did Mason visit these aristocratic residences; but the owners returned his visits whenever chance took them into Yorkshire. He lent his rectory to Lady Conyers in 1779,[87] and entertained a whole galaxy there — "Harcourts, Holdernesses, and Conyers for visitors of quality and of gentry myriads besides."[88] A few years later, Gaskarth, Bursar of Pembroke, visited him.[89]

[74] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 33.
[75] *Ibid.*, II, 159.
[76] *Correspondence of Gray, etc.*, Toynbee ed., II, 224.
[77] Delany *Correspondence*, Sec. Ser., III, 109.
[78] D'Arblay, *Diary*, June 3, 1771.
[79] Delany *Correspondence*, Sec. Ser., III, 232, n.
[80] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 167.
[81] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VI, 438, n.
[82] Delany *Correspondence*, Sec. Ser., II, 6 *et seq.*
[83] *Ibid.*
[84] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VI, 70.
[85] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 48.
[86] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VII, 85.
[87] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VII, 263, n.
[88] *Ibid.*, and Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., II, 194.
[89] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 100.

Stonehewer of His Majesty's excise,[90] came to see him. Sir Joshua Reynolds appeared in 1770.[91] Montagu was at Aston in 1779, declared it "like a bower in Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*," and dined with Lord and Lady Stafford.[92] Mason was honored by the presence of his archiepiscopal diocesan, seemingly a rather *gauche* cleric. He came to dinner; and he, in return, says Mason, invited "both me and my portmanteau with two bows, one for my portmanteau and another for myself." [93]

His numerous friends, moreover, held him in considerable esteem. His intimacy with Gray and Walpole needs no further comment. *The Harcourt Papers* reveal him sometimes as lecturing his lordship of Nuneham in the most approved pedagogic style; and Mrs. Delany pictures him the sought-after darling of the nobility. Sir Leslie Stephen is indeed conservative when he speaks of "a few visits to his aristocratic friends."

The secret of this considerable prestige is to be found, I believe, in Mason's social charm. Anna Seward, to be sure, referred to his "splenetic and insolent speeches," and credited him, in spite of "all his glowing imagination," with a "morose temper, haughty spirit, and cold heart"; but she admitted never having met him, and, at the time of writing, was in violent opposition to his political views.[94] Miller drew him as capricious and rather conceited. I doubt not that he was somewhat of both; but, after the estrangement of the two, Miller probably saw only the less agreeable side of his character.[95] Garrick, however, said that, although he was "peevish," there was "poetry about him"[96]; and Whitehead declared, "poets are odd creatures, & he one of the oddest."[97] Much of the testimony, moreover, is favorable to the point of eulogy. Polwhele's young friend who visited Mason at Aston in 1788, found his manners "mild and amiable." [98] Wesley compared him very favorably to Gray, on reading the *Memoirs*: "I was quite shocked at the contempt with which he [Gray] speaks of Mr. Mason, one full as ingenious as himself, yea, full as good a poet

[90] *Ibid.*, III, 296.
[91] *D.N.B.*, *sub* Reynolds.
[92] Delany *Correspondence*, Sec. Ser., II, 446.
[93] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VI, 438, n.
[94] Seward, *Letters*, IV, 334, 339.
[95] Miller, *Doncaster*, 161, n.
[96] Colman, *Posthumous Letters*, 310.
[97] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 327.
[98] Polwhele, *Traditions and Recollections*, 215. This friend seems to have been a Mr. R. Greville. See Southey, *The Doctor*, IV, 272.

. . . and, over and above, possessed of that modesty and humanity wherein Mr. Gray was so greatly deficient." [99] Joseph Warton spent a few days at York, tea'd and supped with Mason, and thought him "the most easy, best natur'd, agreeable man I ever met with." [100] Nichols refers to the "accomplish'd Mr. Mason." [101] Mrs. Delany, before their political disagreement, tells us: "Mr. Mason is in town, but he may be gone before I get there. He is like a meteor, and blazes but for a moment. His visits are as bright as short." [102] And the Dowager-Countess Gower dubbed him "ye rarity." His manners must surely have possessed the finest polish of that polished age, combined with the rather agreeable whimsies of a humorous personality.

But Mason had a more significant place in the social structure than that of a mere ornament. In his various clerical offices, he occupied positions of high spiritual trust. His biographers, after casting the conventional reflections upon the eighteenth-century Church of England, damn Mason with faint praise. Dobson is characteristic: "Mason was a placid, amiable, well-educated man, and also a highly-respectable specimen of the comfortably beneficed ecclesiastic of that apathetic Georgian epoch, when, it has been said, little remained in the larger part of the English Church but 'a decorous sense of duty and a sleepy routine of practice.' " [103] *Blackwood's,* in reviewing the Gray-Mason letters, is somewhat more unkind: "Throughout their [Mason's and Gray's] correspondence, the Rev. William Mason never alludes to his clerical profession in any one respect but as a means of living well and comfortably in the world — as a career in which promotion and good living are to be encountered." [104] In truth, Mason, in writing Gray, refers comparatively seldom to his cassock and surplice; but may this not have been because he felt that Gray looked on the Church merely as a way of livelihood, and that the youthful Mason feared the terrible charge of "enthusiasm"? When his father left him nothing, Gray applauded his entering the Church

[99] Wesley, *Journal,* Dec. 3, 1776, VI, 134. Wesley's literary taste seems to have been distinctly sentimental.

[100] Wooll, *Warton,* June 3, 1765, 308.

[101] Nichols, *Lit. Anecd.,* V, 652. Nichols probably did not know him; but he voices the immediate Mason tradition.

[102] Delany *Correspondence,* Sec. Ser., II, 70.

[103] Dobson, *At Prior Park,* 245.

[104] *Blackwood's,* LXXV, 251.

to provide for himself, and, half in jest, accused him of "avarice" forever after. In like manner, Gray urged Norton Nicholls to take orders and get his family and acquaintance to secure him preferment — advice that Nicholls followed, much to his worldly advantage.[105] Mason's letters do not rise to a high spiritual level; but he undoubtedly had feelings of propriety and duty as a priest; he lived not without consideration of spiritual values, as he was able to understand them; and his latter days at Aston seem to have been of a distinctly pious cast.

Overton and Relton[106] give an ecclesiastical survey of the period that throws much light on clerical biography. Warburton, the characteristic prelate of the generation, is pictured as a "free and easy liver . . . but, if one diverged one hair's breadth from the narrow rut in which Warburton's thought moved, he condemned him without benefit of clergy." And again the Bishop's religion is described as a "combination of laxity of practice with the most inelastic theory."[107] The "enthusiasm" of the Methodists and the "atheism" of the Deists were his especial abhorrence, and their flourishing condition led him to a despair that had in it perhaps a bit of self-complacency. The leaders of the Church had been forced so to intellectualize their religion in the struggle against Deism that its more emotional aspects were put in the background.

Of the lower clergy, little is said in the few books that cover the period. Like the lower clergy in France before the Revolution, theirs was often a wretched case. The current magazines discuss their condition as a national scandal. Indeed, one good reason for pluralities was that the salaries fixed centuries before when the purchasing power of money was far greater, would have been miserable pittances had not several preferments been combined. The following open letter, printed in July, 1760, gives but too true a picture of conditions. ". . . Going into a clergyman's house . . . I found him sitting at the head of a long square table, such as is commonly used in this country by the lower class of people, dressed in a coarse blue frock, trimmed with black horn buttons; a checked shirt, a leathern strap about his neck for

[105] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 125; Mitford ed., 219 etc.

[106] Overton and Relton, *The English Church, 1714-1800*, London, 1906.

[107] *Ibid.*, 163.

a stock, a coarse apron, and a pair of great heavy wooden shoes, plated with iron to preserve them (what we call clogs in these parts) with a child upon his knee eating breakfast: his wife and the remainder of his family, which consist of nine children, were some of them employed in waiting on each other, the rest in teasing and spinning wooll, at which trade he himself is a great proficient: And, moreover, when it is made ready for sale, will lug it sixteen or thirty-two weight at a time upon his back, and on foot seven or eight miles to market, even in the depth of winter." [108] With all Queen Anne's bounty and the donations from his parishioners, he had only £14 a year; this with the interest — some £6 — on a little money he had inherited and managed to save amounted to an income of £20 a year! In another article appears a scheme to unite parishes with incomes of but £15 or £20 a year, "of which there are an incredible number"; and the editor notes one in Essex which paid but £6 a year.[109] "A poor curate of Yorkshire" pours forth satire upon the subject[110]; and, again and again, recur essays on "miseries and hardships of the inferior clergy."[111] Even a man of Churchill's merit had to supplement his clerical stipend by miscellaneous teaching — and even then could not make both ends meet.[112] The vast majority of the clergy of the English Church had little leisure for study or contemplation; they were either, like Mason, trying to fill half a dozen employments at once,[113] or, like the unfortunate clergyman just described, they had to eke out a scant living by some confining and often menial occupation.

One cannot, then, altogether wonder that the Established Church was not always strong before its rivals or always wise in meeting the problems of the day. Its chief rival was Deism; and its greatest problem was the Wesleyan movement within its borders. Warburton,[114] Bishop of Gloucester, and Livingston,[115] Bishop of

[108] *Gent. Mag.*, XXX, 317-318.
[109] *Ibid.*, XXX, 472.
[110] *Ibid.*, XXX, 583.
[111] *Ibid.*, XXXIII, 536 *et seq.* A number, on the other hand, had the rather easy life pictured in Polwhele's *Rural Rector*, London, 1831.
[112] See Hannay's *Memoir* in Churchill, *Works*, London, 1892, xii.
[113] Even the Puritanic Cowper approved of pluralities, under such conditions. Cowper, *Letters*, London, 1904, I, 182.
[114] See Warburton, *Rational Account of the Nature and End of the Sacrament of Our Lord's Supper.*
[115] See Livingston, *Comparison between the Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists.*

Exeter, led the condemnation of Methodism, and many men of rank and intellect approved their action; for England was still sufficiently near to the religious struggles of the seventeenth century to fear Wesley's emotionalism and condemn it as dangerous "enthusiasm" to be put in the same class as the "superstitious zeal" of the "Papist." Men of "common sense," moreover, associated it with that Calvinistic hypochondria that afflicted Cowper and that Crabbe has pictured so vividly among the lower orders.[116] To us, the theology of Warburton may seem a bit illogical and not very Anglican, but it passed in its day for reason personified and orthodoxy incarnate; and a cold, static theology of this stamp could hardly have much use for the emotional methods of an evangelical revival. Mason's attitude toward the Methodists was not unlike that of Warburton; and he specifically approved the Bishop's attack upon Wesley.[117]

As to Deism, as we have seen in an earlier chapter, Mason was undoubtedly touched in his youth with the heterodox Sentimentalism of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson. Warburton urged him to drop poetry if he felt a "call" to the priesthood: "This sacrifice, I said, I thought was required at any time, but more indispensably so in this, when we are fighting with Infidelity *pro aris et focis*." [118] Mason did not lay down his poetic quill, nor was he less sentimental, for all the Bishop's monitions; but there seems no reason to doubt the orthodoxy of his practice; for he seems, on the whole, to have kept his Sentimentalism and his theological dogma apart. In congratulating Beattie on his *Essay on the Immutability of Truth*, he speaks of Hume's Deism as "a disgrace"[119]; and the *Memoirs of Gray* certainly give the impression that he was quite orthodox and anti-deistical.[120] The Tory *Quarterly* in 1816 explains that Dr. Burgh, whose "faith is as pure as his life," influenced Mason, in spite of the latter's political connection with "Unitarians and schismatics," never to swerve from the narrow path! [121] Burgh may have influenced Mason; but to the Tory

[116] See F. J. Foakes Jackson, *Social Life in England, 1750-1850*, New York, 1916, 65, 69, 71, 94, etc.

[117] Warburton, *Letters of an Eminent Prelate*, 341.

[118] *Ibid.*, 171.

[119] Sir Wm. Forbes, *Beattie*, ed. 1824, I, 205-206; Margaret Forbes, *Beattie*, 63; Gray *Correspondence*, Tovey ed., III, 289 and note; and Mason's satiric attack on Hume in the *Heroic Epistle*.

[120] *Ann. Reg.*, 1775, 162-163.

[121] *Quart. Rev.*, XV, 380.

reviewer, every Whig parson was open to the suspicion of false doctrine, heresy, and schism. As early as 1761, Mason himself intimates the strictness of his own theology by approving Harcourt as "a good catholic Christian"[122]; the word "catholic" suggests that his churchmanship was even a trifle "High." Hannah More does not doubt Mason's being "piously disposed," but wishes his writings had a more "devotional spirit," and blames his shortcomings on the influence of the "Warburtonian School."

On the practical side, Mason solved the financial problem by holding a plurality of livings: the rectorship of Aston, the prebend and precentorship at York, the canonry there, and the chaplaincies to Lord Holdernesse and to the king. But let us, in justice, admit that he really endeavored to fulfill the duties involved. That he was never satisfied, may be true: Mrs. Delany says in 1780 that "misguided and disappointed ambition perverted and preyed upon his excellent genius"[123]; and Mason had long before (1761) admitted that ". . . an unpreferr'd Clergyman, like myself [!], or indeed any clergyman except the Archbishop of Canterbury only, has or ought to have, some temporal as well as spiritual hope."[124] His frequent repetition of the *nolo episcopari* to Harcourt in the 1780's and '90's suggests that a bishopric would have been gratifying to his latter years; but, at least, he was no worse than his colleagues, and surely it is not quite reprehensible for a man to try to raise himself to a higher plane of usefulness.

Mason may have been a pluralist, but he was a conscientious one, and fulfilled his duties to the letter. He often wrote his own sermons, as attested by a volume of his published *Works*, a thing less common than to-day. In 1761, he is "metamorphosing some good old homilies"[125] for the benefit of his parishioners. Whitehead found him the "finest preacher in the whole country," and declared that "villages and towns flocked to hear him."[126] Social activities gave place to clerical: he cut short his stay in London, and even omitted seeing the Dowager-Countess of Gower, in order "to preach in his parish on ye fast day."[127] At the same

[122] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 17.

[123] Delany *Correspondence*, Sec. Ser., II, 567-568.

[124] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 18. Cf. Chapter IV, notes 12 and 42; and V, n. 121.

[125] Gray-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., 243.

[126] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 214.

[127] Delany *Correspondence*, Sec. Ser., II, 288.

time, he did not force his belief upon his skeptical friends[128]; his faith found its expression in action rather than words. He trained his own choir at Aston,[129] as well as the Cathedral choristers at York. In the spring of 1777, the Archbishop paid Mason a Confirmation visit; and Mason in person took up the fortnight before "in parochial preparations, such as making out terriers [rent-rolls], catechising children, writing them out confirmation tickets, etc., etc., preaching on the subject, etc., etc., all of which [as he tells Walpole] you have no conception of, and would think it, if you had, my curate's business." [130] Besides these duties at Aston, he endured his three months at York, and served his time for royalty in London.

He was, moreover, deeply interested in various charities. Polwhele says that he devoted a third of his income to this purpose.[131] There is the case of Smart, for whom Mason got up subscriptions at a time when his own purse was none too full.[132] In 1774, Smart, who had gone mad, was still receiving regular bounty from Mason,[133] and the rector's pensioners were apparently rather numerous. Other sorts of benevolence were characteristic of him. In 1777, with Walpole's help, he restored the "empty Gothic shrine" in York Minster of William de Hatfield. Mason ironically explains, ". . . though we [the Chapter at York] have received five marks a year ever since the Reformation for not praying for the said William's soul, I do not think we shall be grateful enough to his alabaster body to place him in the said shrine, by expense of the Chapter. However, I think I can do this work for three or four guineas. . . ." [134] Moreover, he "improved and adorned" the church at Aston, and did much for education in the village.[135] Indeed, "Mason's charities did not evaporate in effusions of sensibility." [136]

There is no doubt, moreover, that his contemporaries recognized his good works. The skeptical Walpole declared him "an excel-

[128] Wilberforce, II, 109.
[129] Fitzgerald, *The Kembles*, I, 258.
[130] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VI, 438, n.
[131] Polwhele, *Traditions and Recollections*, I, 121.
[132] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 11-12.
[133] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VI, 51.
[134] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VI, 436, n., and 442.
[135] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., I, xxiii.
[136] Polwhele, *Traditions and Recollections*, 494-495.

lent parish priest." [137] Hurd echoed the phrase and spoke of the "respect and veneration" of his parishioners.[138] Mrs. Siddons called him "with all his oddities, a benevolent man," spoke of his "pious and valuable existence," and termed him "the almost adored parish priest." [139] Walpole called him "blameless"[140]; and his enemy, Johnson, also used the adjective.[141] Hunter says "he raised the character of the clergy of this deanery [Doncaster] by his example and good taste." [142] Even the *Quarterly*, almost twenty years after his death, admits: "It was, perhaps, to his credit, that in a country neighborhood, and among persons unable to judge of his higher qualifications, he was considered rather as a man of strong sense and independent spirit, than as a peculiar and unintelligible character." [143] Certainly, this is more than could be said for Wordsworth—with all his glorification of peasant life — in his Cumberland surroundings.

The *Quarterly* is, however, inclined also to cast the first stone. Its Tory proclivities find in Mason "contempt of superiors, and hatred of subordination," chiefly because he did not love his Tory metropolitan, Markham, or his Sovereign Lord, George III.[144] The "lord paramount of Aston" [145] was not, indeed, always perfection. He seems to have allowed artistic considerations to influence his choice of curate, and on occasion wished for one who could "play on the music." [146] Sometimes, political turns must have put him in a very hard position. He would not ring his cracked church-bells for victories over the Americans in the Revolutionary War; and, in 1779, he managed only with conscientious difficulty to pray "six times every day" when Parliament was in session, for the confounding of the king's enemies.[147] Such exigencies are liable to arise in any clergyman's life; and especially the Church of England, tied willy nilly to the State, may make a priest's

[137] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., I, 300.

[138] Kilvert, *Hurd*, 247.

[139] Fitzgerald, *The Kembles*, I, 252-253.

[140] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., I (Mar. 23, 1774), 134.

[141] Piozzi, *Johnson*, 38.

[142] Hunter, *Doncaster*, II, 168.

[143] *Quart. Rev.*, XV, 381. All this testimony goes far toward disproving the charges that have been brought against the private life of Mason and Gray. See MS. letters of Mitford, Dyce, *et al.* in Harvard Treasure Room.

[144] *Ibid.*, XV, 379.

[145] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 116.

[146] *Ibid.*, VII, 114.

[147] *Ibid.*, VII, 61-62.

politics a matter of some spiritual perplexity. Undoubtedly, Mason was, if not over-devout, at least dutiful and kind.

In a summary of this sort, something ought perhaps to be said of Mason's philosophy of life. As an earlier chapter[148] has pointed out, he seems to have read Shaftesbury and Hutcheson in his college days; and Sentimentalism surely marked him for her own in the early '50's. It was more than a young man's fascination with a new and radical mode of thought; for, even when in later years, a busy life and his clerical profession made him abandon — if he had ever really held — its more skeptical teachings,[149] its emotionalism still ran rampant in *Religio Clerici* and in *The English Garden*, strongly mixed with a frigidity almost Neo-classical. One of the characteristics of the age was hard-headed practicality in life combined with a craving for exquisite emotional sensations. Of the latter, Rousseau is the stock example; and Mason, who admired him excessively,[150] and had doubtless shed tears over the *Héloïse*,[151] was tainted with his ailment. Mason's literary work at times exudes "sensibility"; and "sensibility" appears often in his letters. He wrote to Walpole concerning Palgrave: "He is an excellent creature, has infinite original humor, and, what is better, a good heart." [152] Walpole, urging Mason to visit him a little later, declared: "I am petitioning your heart and not your fancy, and know I apply at the right office." It is just like the chilly Walpole to refer to Mason's sentimental "heart" as an "office"! [153] The youthful "R. G.," Polwhele's protégé, found that Mason's "head and heart appear to act and react reciprocally" [154] and that they were about evenly balanced; whereas Gray thought he had not much that one could "call a passion." [155] The fact is that like many sentimentalists, Mason could at will be as cold a man of the eighteenth century as possible, or, when he chose, could drift with his emotions fancy-free along the shores of any convenient Arcadia.

[148] Chapter II.

[149] Whether, indeed, he ever wholly accepted Sentimentalism is a matter of question.

[150] See Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 266; II, 77, 188, etc.

[151] Gray says: "The *Héloïse* cruelly disappointed me, but it has its Partisans among wch are Mason and Mr. Hurd." *Ibid.*, II, 249.

[152] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VIII, 11, n.

[153] *Ibid.*, VIII, 31.

[154] Polwhele, *Traditions and Recollections*, 218.

[155] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 36.

Mason was a strange mixture of contradictions. He had enough sense of Neo-classical decorum to love the "Town" and its "polite circles," to write satires in the vein of Pope, and to translate Dufresnoy somewhat in the manner of Boileau. He had enough superficial emotionalism to be avid of Rousseau, to fill *Elfrida* and *Caractacus* with melodrama, and to flood *The English Garden* with tears. Yet his emotionalism sometimes impelled him to the most admirable actions: he gave generously and regularly to charity; he interpreted the Rights of Man in the very practical demands for legal protection of authors' copyright and for adequate representation of the people in the House of Commons. The Reign of Terror and the more extreme aspects of the democratic movement, he viewed with dismay. He belonged to his age, and exemplified the conflict of influences to which his social class was subjected, just as he reflected its manifold interests. In his life, he somewhat illustrates the struggle between the Neo-classical and the Romantic; and, in his works, literary, musical, and dramatic, the same struggle is even more apparent.

Of Mason's personal appearance, there is little to say. To have made the friendships that he did, his manners must have been rather prepossessing. The three pictures that I have seen of him seem to date from middle life.[156] His forehead was high but somewhat retrogressive; his nose sharp and turned up; the lower part of the face a little suggestive at once of petulance and love of ease. The Reynolds portrait, which may have been done as late as the 1780's, shows a plump hand, a wide expanse of cheek and a suggestion of double chin. The face is not strong perhaps; but at least it is not unkindly. If we may take literally Mason's poetic *billet* to Harcourt, he was "all fat and sleek" even as early as the 1750's[157]; and in the late '70's, Whitehead charged him with having "grown grey-haired & intolerably fat," whereupon Mason termed Whitehead "a horrid creature." [158] His eyes gave him constant trouble, an ailment that Mitford attributed to the dark corner in the library at Aston where he usually sat and

[156] These three—a copy of the Reynolds portrait and two other engravings—are reproduced in this volume. It is interesting to note how Reynolds posed Mason, so that the slant in his forehead and his turned-up nose might be as inconspicuous as possible.

[157] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 7.

[158] *Ibid.*, VII, 60.

wrote.[159] Aside from this, his health, until old age came upon him, was excellent; he escaped even gout,[160] the common complaint of the eighteenth century. Norton Nicholls, perhaps through prejudice, ascribed to Mason's voice, "a surly, nasal tone." [161] Mrs. Siddons says that he spoke "broad Yorkshire"[162]; and it is amusing to hear him condemn the same dialect in a friend's mouth as "shocking." [163]

For my own part, I imagine the older Mason as a rather stout, clerical-looking little person, cold and even pompous before strangers; to his friends, full of pettish humors and crochets, but possessed of a kindly wit; fond of his port and his garden, enamoured of his paintings and his music and his "scribbles" — and yet daily fulfilling the duties of his clerical profession and capable of considerable sacrifice when important matters were involved, such as parliamentary reform or the legality of copyright. He was an affectionate husband and a loyal friend; and he did not allow the Sentimentalism that marked his writings seriously to disarrange a life fundamentally built upon the ideals of Christian duty and Neo-classical decorum. He represents the beginning of the movement from a Neo-classical to a Romantic culture. Like Gray, Walpole, Shenstone, Hurd, and the Wartons, he plays with the fire that was to ignite social and literary revolution; but he does not let it touch the serious affairs of his life. He takes Orders, marries, and plays the dilettante, in the usual and proper fashion. His natural, hardly conscious, decisions and acts were still running in the habitual channel of decorum; but conscious thought had turned to a new vision, which, in the following generations of Wordsworth and of Byron, came to dominate not merely the words but the very actions and lives of its apostles. Mason is the typical exemplar of the incipient Romanticism that sprang from the grafting of Sentimentalism upon the old stock of Neo-classical propriety.

[159] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 317, n. See also, *Ibid.*, II, 32-35, 62-65, 72; III, 76-80.

[160] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., V, 411, n.

[161] Nicholls, *Correspondence*, 40.

[162] Fitzgerald, *The Kembles*, I, 252. Some of his rhymes have been defended on this ground. For examples of 18th cent. Yorkshire, see *Archiv. für Stud. der Neu. Sp.*, CXXXIII, 134, and Marshall's *Rural Economy of Yorkshire*, reviewed in *Europ. Mag.*, XIII, 418; XIV, 345 etc.

[163] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 53.

CHAPTER VIII

MASON'S MINOR POEMS

THE *Works* of William Mason in four volumes published in 1811, contain practically all his verse except the anonymous satires, which were collected separately as the *Works* of Malcolm Macgreggor. The present chapter takes up Mason's odes, elegies, sonnets, and miscellaneous minor poems, as they appear in volume I. At the beginning stands a significant quotation from the *Dinarchus* of Dionysius Halicarnensis, which may be freely translated as follows: "In all the models (archetypes), there appears a certain natural (innate) grace and vigor. But to those prepared from these, even though they attain to the highest pitch of imitation, there appertains, nevertheless, something labored and not arising naturally." [1] This quotation is all too apt. Like most authors of the period, Mason was too fond of imitation[2]; and he constantly abounds in echoes. He did not, moreover, like the Elizabethan alchemists, borrow lead to turn it to gold: he rather prepared an Alexandrian conglomerate; and his obtrusive decorations point to no very valuable substance. At times, he shows himself a clever virtuoso in the music of verse; but, about his work, as about so much eighteenth-century art, there is always "something labored and not arising naturally."

Formal imitation, such as this, is essentially Neo-classical; but the models that he, in common with his generation, employed, are usually thought of as Romantic: Spenser, Milton, and the Elizabethans. Thus in his poetry as in his life and thought, he shows at once the old stock and the incipient growth of the new.[3] When Mason began to write, Pope had already passed away; and, with his going, Neo-classicism suffered a decline. The age was not yet Romantic; but a tide of reaction, at least momentarily, disturbed the current of the stream; Johnson had not yet arisen to declare

[1] *Works*, I, 2. The quotation introduces *Musæus*.

[2] On the theories of imitation in vogue during this period, see an article by the present author, *P.M.L.A.*, Sept., 1921.

[3] Cf. O. Shepherd, *Journal of Eng. and Ger. Phil.*, XVI, 153.

the heroic couplet the highest form of verse and to maintain the Cowleys and the Wallers upon their pedestals. The fifties were a sort of "false dawn" that heralded the Romantic nineteenth century; and, with his Sentimentalism and his experiments as a versifier, Mason is a fair representative of Neo-classicism growing feeble, and of Romanticism in its green-sickness of inglorious youth.

His attitude toward poetry was that of a formal technician: his virtuosity is not instinct with creative imagination, and is galvanized into seeming life only by mawkish Sentimentalism. In a letter to Harcourt, he made an illuminating admission: ". . . God forbid I should be so unthankful to Providence as either to suppose or even to say that I had no particle of that divine spark [*furor poeticus*]. I only said that I had often palm'd versification upon the world for it, & that it pass'd for current; & so I have often done, as you well know. . . . Poetical genius is a thing as different from a happy talent of putting wit into easy versification as two things can be; yet, setting wit aside, versification only will do the business in an age which admits so little to any true critical principles as that very enlightened one in wch it is our felicity to live." [4] Mason, then, was more or less conscious of his uninspired cleverness. He blamed the age; but more probably it was his attention to facile word-matching that smothered whatever of the "divine spark" he may have had. That Mason thought much on poetics, and gave much attention — not always with the best taste — to technical minutiæ, his works attest. Warton, moreover, credits him with the invention of an æsthetic term, since famous in literary criticism: "Pure Poetry," an expression which Warton describes as "happy and judicious." [5] The term was not originally Mason's,[6] but he did, indeed, use it as early as 1752[7];

[4] *Harcourt Papers,* VII, 105, Feb. 2, 1785.

[5] Warton, *History of Eng. Poet.,* London, 1781, III, 438.

[6] The first use I have found of the term is in John Brown's *Essays on Characteristics,* London, 1751, 18-19.

[7] *Letter III* published with *Elfrida, Works,* II, 186, and again in a note to the *Elegy* to Miss Pelham, written in 1754. Gray uses the term in writing to Mason in 1757, Gray *Letters,* Tovey ed., I, 357; Whitehead in his *Charge to the Poets,* Chalmers, XVII, 233; and Joseph Warton in his *Essay on Pope* (iv, corrected ed., 1782). The thing itself was doubtless held in high regard by this group. (See Gray *Letters,* Tovey ed., I, 323, and Hurd's *Idea of Universal Poetry,* 1766.) Cf. Johnson's "pure science," *Rambler,* XIV, ¶ 5.

and he himself wrote a kind of "pure poetry." In *Musæus*, he ascribes Pope's greatness to "rhyme subdued"[8]; poetry is "flowery fiction" as opposed to truth[9]; and, when truth does come in, it is Neo-classical "sense." [10] No wonder he gives *Musæus* a loquacious demise, while he is parading his skill, in mimicry of Chaucer, Spenser, and Milton. This somewhat primitive technical display has long since been outdone by apt inventors and revivalists from Shelley and Victor Hugo down to *la Parnasse* and the English exemplars of art for art's sake; but, undoubtedly, just as Mason's compeers foreshadowed nineteenth-century Sentimentalism and love of Nature, so he foreshadows those "Corinthian felicities" of verse which were blossoming with such luxuriance in the 1890's.

What we know of his method of composition supports this general impression. Gray "labored every line as it arose in the train of composition." [11] Mason "labored every line" — often with Gray's assistance — but, if we may trust the uncertain word of the bibulous Nicholls, he did not labor as the passage "arose in the train of composition": "On my saying," says Nicholls, "that much of Mason's poetry appeared to me to be without force, and languid, he [Gray] said: 'No wonder, for Mason never gave himself time to think, but imagined that he should do best by writing hastily, in the first fervor of his imagination, and therefore never waited for his epithets if they did not occur readily, but left spaces for them, and put them in afterwards': this, Mr. Gray said, enervated his poetry 'for nothing is done so well as at the first concoction.' He said, 'We think in words.' " [12] This condition is just what one might expect; for Mason seems actually to have chosen his epithets not so much for their significance as for their alliteration, their regular cadence, their vowel-music; and, if he can manage to get six initial W's in two lines[13] or four in one,[14] so much the

[8] *Works*, I, 9.

[9] Cf. the Aristotelian "imagination." The eighteenth century had wandered far from the worship of its nominal gods!

[10] *Works*, I, 11.

[11] According to Johnson, *Univ. Mag.*, LXIX, 201. The fact is generally known.

[12] Gray-Nicholls *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., 39.

[13] *Works*, I, 13:

"Now wept the Nymphs, witness, ye waving shades!
Witness, ye winding streams! the Nymphs did weep."

[14] *Works*, I, 14:

"And roses wan were waved by zephyrs weak."

better. His verse has little of "high seriousness": it appeals to the senses rather than to the mind.[15]

Mason, in his own day, was not unsuccessful: there was just enough novelty to delight and not enough to alarm. Some thought he promised wonderful things; but, in his later years, it was generally agreed, that, in Heine's phrase, he had his great future behind him. Warburton, in February, 1750, declared him and Brown two young men "who prevent us from despairing of the quick revival of the poetic genius." [16] *The Critical Review*, in discussing his *Poems*, fourteen years later, found that even if he "is not so animated and sublime, he is more elegant, moral and correct, than most of his contemporaries," and that *Elfrida* alone would class him "amongst our best poets." [17] This is certainly much saner praise than that of Anna Seward, who ecstatically assured her friend Hardinge that Mason's poetry "thrilled" her veins, and brought to her eyes "tears of delight." [18] Somewhat later, she more wisely confined her laudation to his "versatility of style" [19] — a judgment with which Sir Brooke Boothby, "a coy critic," agreed. Hayley called Mason the "Harmonious Chief of Britain's living Choir," [20] and passed over his more gifted friend as "modest Gray." [21] Hayley, like Warburton, evidently hoped great things of Mason[22]; but, in his *Memoirs* under date of June 26, 1782, he was constrained to write that Mason "perceives his own credit with the public much on the decline." [23] But Mason's reputation as a versifier still remained, and the *Gentleman's Magazine* praised "Rowley" for being "smooth and mellifluous as Pope or Mason," [24] and elsewhere referred to "so correct a poet as Mason." [25] By 1786, Mason wrote Harcourt that he had "a fellow-feeling for all damned poets." [26] Mason's great future was already falling behind him. The newer public cared less and less for his works; but his own contemporaries still paid him

[15] This quality is admirably hit off in *Conversations at Cambridge*, 1836, 162; but I fancy that Mason's table-talk, like his letters, was much less ornate in style than his poetry.

[16] Nichols, *Lit. Anecd.*, II, 212.

[17] *Crit. Rev.*, XVII, 237.

[18] Seward, *Letters*, I, 194-195.

[19] *Ibid.*, IV, 364.

[20] Hayley, *Epic Poetry*, line 14.

[21] *Ibid.*, line 13.

[22] Minto, *Literature of the Georgian Era*, 18-20.

[23] Hayley, *Memoirs*, I, 274.

[24] *Gent. Mag.*, LII, 195.

[25] *Ibid.*, LII, 195.

[26] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 116.

veneration; and, when Madame D'Arblay found Mathias' *Pursuits of Literature* "semi-divine," she at once attributed it to Mason.[27] In April, 1797, *The Monthly Review* said that Mason's name did not stand so high among English poets as during Gray's lifetime[28]; and the steady decline of his popularity during the last century has already been discussed.

In dealing with Mason's works, therefore, we must look not so much for literary enjoyment as for historical significance: he is a poet, essentially of the latter eighteenth century. The present chapter will take up his minor poems under the various categories: the *Monody*, the odes, the elegies, the sonnets, and the miscellaneous works. Many of these were published separately during his lifetime; and the reviews, satires, or epistolary remarks that they individually inspired are often worthy of comment. In such a poet as Mason, the matters of versification, the meter, melody, trope, and plan are very important; and, in treating his odes, special attention will be given them. His content, moreover, his "sensibility," his favorite concept of "Liberty," his melancholy, his weakness for the pseudo-antique and for ruins: all this is significant. The contemporary influence of Mason's odes, together with the facts of their versification and content, should give a fair idea of their historical position and actual value.

Musæus, a Monody on the Death of Mr. Pope was written in 1744[29] and published by Dodsley in April, 1747.[30] Chaucer, Spenser, and Milton[31] each deliver a complimentary monologue, in supposedly characteristic style, over the dying poet. Mason's imitations *qua* imitations are poor things enough; but, in view of the youth of the poet and the lax scholarship of the age, one feels that modern historians have dealt with them rather hardly. Miss Spurgeon remarks that Mason, in the poem "fournit l'exemple le plus complet peut-être que nous ayons de l'ensemble de solécismes, de barbarismes et de métrique défectueuse qui constituaient, aux yeux des gens d'alors, le 'vers familier' (homely rhyme) de Chau-

[27] D'Arblay, *Diary*, V, 306.
[28] *Mon. Rev.*, XXII, n. s., 437.
[29] *Works*, I, 3.
[30] First ed., Apr. 17, 1747, (*Gent. Mag.*, XVII, 202; and Straus, *Dodsley*, 333); third edition Apr. 3, 1748, (Straus, 334).
[31] Lloyd makes a similar grouping of Chaucer, Spenser, and Milton in his *Progress of Envy*, 1751.

cer." [32] Un-Chaucerian as it is, *Musæus* seems no worse than most of its predecessors; and, undoubtedly, the four editions were widely read. Lounsbury, who may have influenced Miss Spurgeon to single out the poem as the awful example of a bad period, pours vitriolic damnation upon it: "It combines in the compass of some two dozen lines about all the peculiarities of halting verse, bad grammar, uncouth words, and impossible inflections which constituted what the eighteenth century chose to consider the antique diction of Chaucer." He perorates by describing it as "an outrage both upon the memory of the poet and of the speech in which he wrote." [33] Such criticism is more rhetorical than judicious; for one should remember that Mason was writing thirty years before Tyrwhitt's work on the text of the *Canterbury Tales*,[34] and over a century before the appearance of Child's *Observations on the Language of Chaucer*.[35] Hartley Coleridge considered that the lines showed Mason to have "read and studied the elder poets diligently and profitably" [36]; but more recently, Austin Dobson [37] suggests, one must suppose jocosely, that Mason knew Milton, Chaucer, and Spenser only "from Pope's parodies rather than from the originals."

Truly, the Chaucerian lines are little better than Pope's,[38] which were very poor indeed. By making one syllable of thilke, schoole, fayre, fennes, etc., Pope threw all his scansion out of gear; Mason at least knew enough to count the *-es* of the genitive as an unstressed syllable[39]; and once or twice, he even counted a final *-e*, putting a grave accent on it. As to Chaucerian grammar, which Pope ignored, and Chaucerian diction, which he bungled sadly,[40] Mason was no better than his age. In one respect, however, he definitely improved upon Pope. The older poet had considered Chaucer a mere source for "broad" [41] stories; but Mason granted

[32] Spurgeon, *Chaucer devant la Critique*, 74-75.

[33] Lounsbury, *Chaucer*, 126 *et seq.*

[34] G. P. Winship: *Geoffry Chaucer*, Boston, 1900, 17-18.

[35] This epoch-making study appeared in the *Memoirs of the American Academy*, 1862, VII, 445 *et seq.*

[36] H. Coleridge, *Lives of Northern Worthies*, II, 258.

[37] *Nat. Rev.*, LIX, 283.

[38] See Pope's *Imitations of English Poets*.

[39] I suspect he borrowed this from the occasional practice of Spenser.

[40] "Secrecie" (line 2) appears to be a barbarism in ME. So also is "Schooleboy" (line 4). "Thilke" (line 3) and "Moral" (line 3) are solecisms. See Skeat's glossary.

[41] See Elwin ed. of Pope, I, 159.

him at least a certain dignity. A comparison with Prior's imitations also, certainly does not show Mason in a bad light.

His imitation of Spenser consists of two pastoral stanzas in the style of *The Shepherd's Calendar* and three "allegorical" stanzas after *The Faerie Queene*.[42] It seems vain to compare the diction and syntax of Spenser, detail for detail, with Mason, or with Pope, whose misrepresentation of Spenser in the *Alley* Warton so admirably damned.[43] Metrically and stanzaically, Mason's imitations are accurate enough; sometimes, his Spenserian diction and spelling give at least a superficial tinge of the older poet's style; and sometimes, a fine concrete touch, as in the description of the peacock,

> He glist'neth purple and he glist'neth gold,
> Now with bright green, now blue himself arraying . . .

takes Mason's lines out of the age of Augustan generalities. Pope's "dapper ditties" (as Mason called them),[44] when they lend themselves to Spenserian imitation, do not even attempt his diction or spelling; and, just as Pope regarded Chaucer as a mere source for low stories, so he undertook to ridicule Spenser's exalted theme by applying the crudest perversion of Spenser's method to the material and moral filth of the *Alley*. Mason, on the other hand, although he still thought with his age, that *The Rape of the Lock* was superior to *The Faerie Queene*, nevertheless credited Spenser, as he did Chaucer, with a serious importance that Pope had denied them both. At any rate, the poem is somewhat better than the ordinary run of early eighteenth-century imitations of Spenser as described by Miss Rinaker:

> The first of these imitators either ignorantly fancied that any arrangement of from six to ten iambic pentameter lines capped with an Alexandrine, with distinctly Popeian cadence and a sprinkling of 'I ween,' 'I weet' and 'whilom' by way of antiquated diction, could pass for Spenserian verse, or followed the letter of the stanza closely enough, but failed to take their model seriously, and misapplied it to vulgar burlesque, social and political satire, and mere moralizing.[45]

[42] Morton does not mention Mason's imitations (*Mod. Phil.*, X, 365).

[43] Pope, IV, 425.

[44] Mason took the expression from the October *Eclogue of The Shepherd's Calendar*.

[45] Rinaker, *Thomas Warton*, 39-40.

The imitation of Milton has a strong suggestion of the *Seasons*. Thomson caught something of Milton's device of *enjambement*, his cosmic figures and resounding phrases, and combined them with a certain prolixity and weakness of imitation. Mason had doubtless read *Paradise Lost*; but he saw it largely through Thomsonian eyes. This imitation, like the others, is interesting as a youthful *tour de force*, and the proof of a certain technical virtuosity on the part of the young poet; but its literary value is very slight.

To us, *Musæus* seems a rather trivial performance; but it was widely read in its day, and, indeed, gave rise to Mason's reputation in the literary world. Three regular editions came out in 1747 and 1748; and it appeared also in Dodsley's *Miscellany*, published in 1748, and in later collections. Dr. Heberden asked Mr. Birch[46] to introduce Mason to Dr. Mead as "the author of *Musæus*."[47] The *Gentleman's Magazine* of October, 1749,[48] contained verses by C. B. *To the Memory of Mr. Pope, occasioned by reading the Monody wrote by Mr. Mason*, and a long note criticizing the poem. C. B. allowed it "merit," but objected to Mason's adopting the languages of Chaucer and Spenser:

> Instead, therefore, of thus meanly borrowing their dress, it would be but justice to them, and to posterity, if we generously lent them our own. Who can read those embellished tales of Chaucer, and the no less improved satires of Dr. Donne, without admiring the piety, as well as the poetry of him who has rescued from oblivion, what must else have perished, in the ruins of an antiquated style, and given them immortality by a language, which we trust will never die?[49]

This is the typical eighteenth-century point of view: to C. B., Mason's imitations, as an example of technical *bravura*, have "merit," and "could not fail of universal applause"; but the return to Chaucer and to Spenser is merely a recrudescence of barbarism. The following month, the *Gentleman's* printed verses from "J. C." of Cambridge.[50] He accused Mason of modesty, and declared him to be "of Britain's noblest wits, a full epitome." He pictured

[46] Thomas Birch, D. D., (1705-1766), editor, biographer, and author especially of *Memoirs of the Reign of Elizabeth*. See *D.N.B.*

[47] Nichols, *Illust.*, II, 146.

[48] *Gent. Mag.*, XIX, 468.

[49] Dryden "embellished" Chaucer; Pope did over Donne's satires.

[50] *Gent. Mag.*, XIX, 516. Probably John Chute, the friend of Gray and Walpole.

Pope as weaving in Elysium "a blooming garland" to adorn Mason's head:

> Chaucer with smiles the laurell'd palm shall view,
> And thy lov'd Spencer[51] own the tribute due.

In December, came a long reply to the criticism of "C. B." signed by "B. C."[52] The author, writing in satirical style, owns ". . . I was thoughtless enough to admire, with the multitude, the *dress* of Mr. *Mason's plan*, as a piece of the most delicate propriety; and really imagined that *Chaucer* and *Spencer* made a more natural and easy figure in the *cloaths* they were used to wear, than any he could have supplied them with of the modern cut. . . ." He approved Mason's plan and execution, and poked a good deal of ponderous fun at "C. B." The fame of *Musæus* was considerable. Gray thought it seemed "to carry with it a promise at least of something good to come."[53] In its April number, 1756, *The Monthly Review*, usually a sharp critic, referred to it in complimentary fashion.[54] In the following year, Cooper declared in his essay on *Taste*, that *Musæus* had given "every Man of true Taste more Pleasure than the joined Efforts of all the Wits of the celebrated Court of Leo the Tenth."[55] Warburton praised it, and thought it betokened a great future.[56] Mathias in *The Pursuits of Literature*, 1794, spoke of Mason as "Musæus,"[57] and declared that this piece and his Druid poetry "still have their charms."[58] The poetess, Anna Seward, writing June 15, 1797, to Miss Stokes, exclaimed: "Look, I implore, at his [Mason's] *Monody*, written at twenty,[59] on the death of Pope — see it commanding the various styles of Spencer, Milton, and Pope, in the most graceful and spirited assumption, and forming those happy imitations into a beautiful funeral poem, upon a new plan!"[60] In 1806, Bowles termed it "the exquisite *Musæus*"[61]; and, as late as 1823, *Elegant Extracts*, included it with Coleridge, Scott, and Byron! *Musæus* is interesting both as showing Mason's interest in Chaucer, Spenser,

[51] This was a common eighteenth-century spelling.
[52] *Gent. Mag.*, XIX, 542.
[53] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 187.
[54] *Mon. Rev.*, XIV, 438.
[55] Cooper, *Letters concerning Taste*, 97.
[56] Watson, *Warburton*, 624.
[57] Mathias, *Pursuits of Lit.*, 358.
[58] *Ibid.*, 15.
[59] Mason was no more than nineteen in 1744.
[60] Anna Seward, *Letters*, IV, 363.
[61] Pope, *Works*, Bowles ed., I, cxviii, n.

and Milton, and as illustrating the technical skill of the youthful poet; but the very fact that it consists largely of imitations gives it less of his essential style than his odes and elegies, and makes it less characteristic of his work.

Unfortunately, the history of the ode in English is yet to be written. Gosse's brief *Preface* to his *English Odes* is the merest sketch; and Shafer's dissertation ends with 1660.[62] A rapid survey of the field may not be amiss. Ben Johnson seems to have been the first poet of consequence[63] to introduce the Pindaric, in his *Ode to the Immortal Memory of that Noble Pair, Sir Lucius Cary and Sir H. Morison.* He followed Pindar carefully: there are four sets of triads, each with strophe, antistrophe, and epode. The strophes and antistrophes are all of one sort as to meter and rhyme; and the epodes are all cast in one form. The Restoration, however, brought in a new fashion, and Cowley wrote "Pindaric" odes of some verve but no set form, and the next hundred years followed him in producing "irregular odes." Congreve, in his *Pindarique Ode Humbly Offer'd to the Queen* (1706), wrote a true imitation of Pindar in strict form; and, to the first edition, he prefixed a "discourse on the Pindarique ode" in which he pointed out the looseness of his contemporaries.[64] Edward Young prefixed to his *Ocean* (1728) a preface of fustian abstractions on the ode form in English. This preface purports to discuss the Pindaric ode[65]; but Young actually writes in conventional stanzas. Ambrose Philips' translations of Pindar, however, are correct[66]; but, like Congreve's effort, unavailing. When the eighteenth cen-

[62] *The English Ode to 1660,* by Robert Shafer, Princeton, 1918. See also Schipper's *English Versification,* Oxford, 1910; and *The English Ode* by L. Binyon in *Essays by Divers Hands,* ed. Inge, Oxford, 1922. A doctorate thesis on the *Pindaric Ode in English* by Herbert E. Hamilton, Ph.D., is on file in MS. in Yale University Library. I regret that I have not been able to consult this work.

[63] For early Elizabethan "odes" see Shafer, 44, 79, etc.

[64] Congreve, with some justness, points out, on the other hand, that the lack of choral production makes exact symmetry less necessary in English than in Greek. The reference to the correct Pindaric in strophic form in Samuel Cobb's *Female Reign* (1709) gives further proof that the structure of the true Pindaric was not quite lost sight of.

[65] Gosse credits him in the *Preface* with urging greater regularity in the ode. Young, to be sure, refers to "my own rules"; but he neglects to state them; and, furthermore, characterizes Dryden's irregular *St. Cecelia* ode *(Alexander's Feast)* as the best ode in English.

[66] Philips tried the interesting experiment of writing his strophes and antistrophes in iambic and his epodes in dactylic meter. In his *First Olympionique,* he has four triads; in his *Second Olympionique,* five.

tury broke away from the heroic couplet and the simple quatrain, it ran riot, especially its lesser poetasters, feeble in inspiration and untrained in architectonic sense.[67] Collins had, in two of his odes, *Mercy* and *To Liberty*, some idea of the form; but, curiously enough, he interpolates his epode between strophe and antistrophe and is not always perfect in his metrical balance.[68]

Up to 1749, then, a truly Pindaric tradition hardly existed. Jonson's minor poem had long since been forgotten; Congreve's *Discourse* was not regularly reprinted with the ode it introduced; and the translations by Philips seem to have gone the way of all mortal books. The poems labelled "odes" [69] were either of the regularly stanzaic, "Horatian" sort, or utterly amorphous "Pindarics," or else non-stanzaic variations of the couplet. In 1749, Dodsley brought out Gilbert West's famous translation of Pindar with a preface on odes.[70] By both theory and precept, West set forth the facts of the case squarely once and for all. Gosse[71] imputes the correctness of Gray's *Bard* to his influence; Courthope imputes it to Collins.[72] Gray, deep in Greek literature in the 1740's, certainly knew Pindar's actual structure, so far as any scholar at the time knew it.[73] The fact remains, however, that he might have taken the first hint from Mason, who, in 1747, two years before West's translations, and the very year he made Gray's acquaintance, wrote his *Ode on Expecting to Return to Cambridge*, in two correctly balanced Pindaric triads, unmistakably numbered for strophe, antistrophe, and epode.[74] This ode may have been written in the months after he met Gray; but Mason, fifty years later, says that his early Pindarics were done under the auspices of Warburton.[75]

[67] One feels that Joseph Warton was largely justified in the poor opinion of the English ode he expressed in his *Essay on Pope*, ed. 1756, 64.

[68] See *Ode to Fear*. Collins' other odes are far from Pindaric.

[69] See Dodsley's first *Collection*, for example, or Bell's *Fugitive Poetry*, London, 1790: Vols. XII-XVI incl. are devoted to "odes."

[70] N. B. the many editions; also H. J. Pye's tribute in his *Pindar*, London, 1775.

[71] Gosse, *Preface to English Odes*.

[72] *Hist. of Eng. Poetry*, V, 393.

[73] Gray was reading Pindar in the spring of 1747, Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 162. Of course, the details of Pindar's metrics are still subject of debate.

[74] Tinker's suggestion (*Nature's Simple Plan*, 67-70) that the Pindaric structure of the odes in *Caractacus* was derived from Gray's *Bard*, is unfortunate, in view of Mason's earlier use of the form.

[75] *Works*, I, 85. And elsewhere, he describes Hurd as "the critic of my youthful lay." *Works*, I, 130.

The odes of Mason fall into four classes. The two earliest are of non-stanzaic type. In his *Ode on Leaving St. Johns*[76] he alternates pentameter and tetrameter couplets; in his *Water Nymph*,[77] he uses run-on quatrains without any spacing between; and, in his *Æolus's Harp*, he repeats the former scheme. Of "irregular" pseudo-Pindarics, he has two, both "for music."[78] He has six odes of the "Horatian" type: *To Independency*, in eight stanzas; *To a Friend*, in four; *Ode XI*, in nine; *Ode XII*, in ten; *Ode to Pitt* (1782) in seven; and a *Secular Ode*, again in ten. Metrically, these stanzas, like the strophes of the Pindarics, were made up of couplets and quatrains held together by the run-on sense. Of true Pindaric odes, Mason has five: the first one, *On Expecting to Return to Cambridge*, has already been discussed as to structure. The *Ode on the Fate of Tyranny* is quite regular. It has three triads, repeats a complex scheme of rhyme and meter in the strophes and antistrophes, and balances likewise the epodes against one another in perfect formal symmetry. It may have been written before West's book came out.[79] *To Memory*, also, is quite regular.[80] His *Ode to the Naval Officers of Great Britain*[81] manages extended and complex strophe-forms. The *Palinodia* against the French Revolution of 1794, has three regular triads; and the *Ode on Wisdom*,[82] written just before his death, has two.

In point of structure, then, Mason may be said to have been abreast, and, in his youth, even ahead of his time. Thomas Warton, who is usually accounted Romantic in the period, has, among his twenty-three odes, only one that could at all pass for Pindaric.[83] The non-stanzaic form Mason quickly abandoned; the irregular form he used only for music; his Horatian odes are technically respectable; and, of true Pindarists, he stands at the beginning of the mid-century revival. If we count the Choruses in his Greek plays, which were much admired, his name must be placed even

[76] Noted in the *Works*, I, *Ode II*, as "written in 1746."

[77] *Ode III*, "written in 1747." Gray liked it; Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 178; I, 187.

[78] *Odes V* and *X*. The former consists of nine irregular sections; the latter of four regular stanzas with irregular introduction and conclusion.

[79] c. 1748. *Works*, I, 85.

[80] Written in 1755. See Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 283-284.

[81] Written early in 1779, *Works*, I, *Ode XII*.

[82] Taken from Job, xxviii.

[83] *Ode XVIII, The New Year*, 1787, has three similar stanzas which may have been intended for Pindaric strophes.

higher. Whether he was or was not an influence upon *The Progress of Poesy* and *The Bard* remains a matter of uncertainty.

The music of Mason's verse was, to his age, perhaps the most obvious and the most pleasing thing about his work. To deal scientifically with this subject is a problem: English meter, even if one adheres to the old accentual system of iambus, trochee, and dactyl, is a complex thing at best; and the finer harmonies of verse-melody, of interlacing and contrasting rhymes, of commingled alliterations, of vowel and consonant assonances and dissonances, singly and in series, all present a parlous maze to the analyst.

Of Mason's meter, a word will suffice. The iambus is his almost invariable norm, usually in tetrameter or pentameter couplets or quatrains, following in sequence to make up the strophe. His lines, often end-stopped and commonly without a very strongly marked cæsura, are, like most of the poetic output of the age, commonly reminiscent of Pope. He seldom varies his pause-lengths; and he allows but little change from the prevailing iambus. His *Ode to Memory,* written in 1755,[84] contains in the course of its seventy-two lines only fourteen inversions and four substitutions; and, in the twenty-four lines of the first strophe, there are but four notable pauses in the midst of the line. Furthermore, most of these inversions and pauses are occasioned, not by the substantial passion of the poem, but rather by conventional tags of rhetoric, such as opening apostrophes, "Rise, hallow'd Milton," [85] and the like. Such verse is obviously monotonous, a grievous fault in the ode, where power of ecstasy should constantly vary the regularity of numbers. Gray's *Bard,* cold as it is, presents a great contrast. In the first seventy-two lines, it has twenty-three inversions, five substitutions, and five verses that lack the first unstressed syllable — almost twice the amount of variation that Mason gives in an equal number of lines. A comparison with such a masterpiece of lyric emotion as Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind* at once betrays Mason's arithmetical frigidity of movement. His *Ode to the Naval Officers of Great Britain,* done in 1779, after he had reached his full power, is somewhat better; but still, in the eighty-six lines, he has no more variation than Gray had

[84] Gray *Letters,* Tovey ed., I, 283-284. [85] *To Memory, Works,* I, 21.

in seventy-two. Mason was never a great metrist; like most of his compeers, he mistook monotony for the "smoothness" recommended by Pope and Boileau. Perhaps the trouble lay even deeper: he had little to say and therefore little emotion with which to vitalize the saying.

As a melodist, Mason presents a most interesting and complex study. His rhymes alone are a unique problem. He was master of certain complex and difficult effects; yet, in all the rhyme-schemes of his odes, he seldom uses one rhyme more than twice and almost never more than three times. Just as he had failed to grasp the unifying power of extensive *enjambement*, so he did not realize the like advantage of formal unity from interlacing rhymes: as a consequence, his strophes, like Gray's, fall into couplets — often closed couplets — and quatrains. He improves somewhat in the later odes; but, although he wrote some thousands of rhymed lines, he is never a master-rhymster: his rhyme-vocabulary is small and worked to the utmost; and, between poetic license and Yorkshire dialect, he allows many assonances and near-rhymes to pass muster.

Mason's achievement lies not in the number, novelty, exactness, or structural value of his rhymes, but in their quality. A survey of all of the sixteen odes shows that he averages 52.04+% liquid or nasal rhymes.[86] This average hardly varies from period to period; and, when one recalls that the ear of Mason was trained professionally to music, the persistence of these musical sounds in the most conspicuous part of his verse, is not surprising. To bring

[86] In Mason's sixteen odes, arranged roughly in chronology, the proportion of nasal and liquid rhymes runs as follows:

ODE	NASAL OR LIQUID RHYMES	TOTAL NO. OF RHYMES
I	16	36
II	20	42
III	15	26
IV	14	25
V	25	49
VI	23	40
VII	16	32
VIII	21	45
IX	9	16
X	8	21
XI	13	27
XII	26	42
XIII	25	51
XIV	23	42
XV	27	49
XVI	25	45

The odes in *Elfrida* average 50.51% liquid or nasal rhymes and in *Caractacus* 53.43+%. Rhymes that end in a liquid or nasal preceded or followed by some other consonant have been counted liquid, except in a few cases (such as—rt) in which the liquid seems to be dominated by the other sound. Phonetic rather than orthographic values have been used: r, l, m, n, and ng, have been counted.

the point even further home, a few comparisons may be profitable. In Canto I of *The Faerie Queene* only about three-eighths of the rhymes are liquid or nasal; in Milton's *L'Allegro*, about the same; Dryden's St. Cecelia odes are about 40%; Pope's choruses to *Brutus* average about two-fifths, but his *Pastorals* and his *Messiah* run to almost half; and very probably it is the influence of Pope's earlier style, still facilely imitable, that popularized the device. In Mason's contemporaries, liquid and nasal rhymes are common. Warton, in the first eight pages of his *Ode on the Approach of Summer*, reaches a proportion of almost one half; Gray averages about 49%; Collins about the same; and the first ten odes in Bell's collection average almost 52%. The later Romanticists and the most musical Victorians seem to drop back again. *Kubla Khan* had not half liquid rhymes; Shelley's *West Wind* is but two-fifths; *The Lady of Shalott*, if we omit the rhymes in -ott and -ot, is not four-ninths liquid; Poe's *Ulalume*, that astonishing melodic *tour de force*, has only half liquid rhymes; Swinburne's hunting song from *Atalanta* has a mere third; and the first half of Wilde's *Sphinx* has not many more. Of course, the music of these poets is largely explicable on other grounds. But just as Mason's meter flows with pedestrian immutability, so his rhymes titillate monotonously with a sweet but rather meaningless iteration of liquids and nasals. They are notable neither for piquant contrasts of sound, such as appear in the *Sphinx*, nor for their suggestive onomatopoetic force as in *Ulalume*. The scope of this work forbids anything like a thorough study of English liquid rhymes; but, if the comparatively small amount of computation done here is a fair criterion, the mid-eighteenth century was the heyday of liquid rhyming and Mason is a particularly good example: the poets were seeking for a finer music, and had not yet learnt really subtle effects. The trick is typical of eighteenth-century art, in which ornament is applied extrinsically to the object, perhaps to a decorative, but surely to no structural purpose.

Mason's alliterations are of a similar nature with a similar result. The device was popular in the eighteenth century. Warton used it too freely.[87] Cowper blamed it upon the malign influence of

[87] Mant, *Memoirs*, in Thomas Warton, *Works*, cxxxiv.

Pope and added: "Unless we could imitate him in the closeness and compactness of his expression as well as the smoothness of his numbers, we had better drop the imitation, which serves no other purpose than to emasculate and weaken all we write." [88] Cowper's dictum applies but too well to Mason. The *Ode to Memory* has in its seventy-two lines, fifty-nine examples of the alliteration of stressed syllables. *Independency* boasts seventy-six in eighty lines: the hunting song in *Atalanta* has no more! In the later Mason, the proportion becomes lower; and his *Ode to the Naval Officers* has but fifty-eight examples in its eighty-six lines. Of all these alliterations, very few seem peculiarly appropriate to the emotion or the sense. Mason is trying to be smooth, and in so doing, only adds to monotonous rhythm and liquid rhymes the somnolent allurements of "apt alliteration's artful aid." As for the fine matching of consonant against consonant and of vowels in series balancing similar series of vowels, the *finesses* of dissonance and assonance within the line, Mason has nothing of these. Gray accused him of omitting epithets and composing in torsos of sentences. One can very well believe it; for, when he did come back to pick his adjective, his original thought being dimmed, he seems to have chosen almost any conventional word that fitted the meter and, if possible, alliterated with some of its neighbors. Thus Mason's verse-melody is ubiquitous, obvious, without contrast, and often without point; and his odes, aside from a chance agreeable verse, are, in large measure, elaborated and feebly disguised fustian.

Mason's tropes bear out this æsthetic judgment only too well. One could forgive their being occasionally mixed if only they were not, as a general thing, so hopelessly frigid. There is in him no primal and imperative emotion which melts the connotative over-tones of his thought into an imaginative whole. Conventional personification and periphrasis are ever present, especially in the earlier odes; and the other figures, chiefly metaphor, are either unrelated fragments of fancy, superimposed upon the verse and emotionally apposite neither to one another nor to the context, or else long and labored comparisons, adding a difficult complexity to the sins of their briefer compeers. *Ode III*, written in 1746,

[88] Cowper, *Letters*, ed. 1904, II, 286, Dec., 1784; see also IV, 19-20.

gives some idea of his earlier manner. It contains, in the course of its fifty-two lines, some nineteen personifications, most of them baldly denotative. Of the other flowers of rhetoric, there are a case of metonymy in "musing head," an innocuous simile in which the "ideal stream" is compared to "gentle Camus," and a few time-honored metaphors in which white hair is "snow"; the prime of life, "noon"; friendship, "wine"; truth, "food"; and a river is described as "warbling." This, of course, is but the work of a college-boy; but, even in *Odes IV, V, VI,* and *VII,* the amount of dull personification is not much mitigated.

After the publication of *Elfrida* with its choruses, however, Mason was pretty well in his poetic stride; and it seems fair to take his *Ode to Memory,* the imagery of which was praised as "sublime" by *The Monthly Review,*[89] as a fair standard of his metaphorical ability. The first strophe will sufficiently exemplify what happened when, in Leigh Hunt's phrase, Mason strove to "fill every line with ore." He is trying to express the grandeur and power of Memory, and apostrophizes her in the first line as "Mother of Wisdom," a good figure, but not his own.[90] This, however, has little to do with the primary conception of the strophe, which seems to figure Memory as a queen, commanding an army, the thoughts of men. The metaphor as such, is good enough; but, even while he is putting it before the reader, he superimposes two others upon it, by calling the army a "throng" and attributing to it the ability to "darken" and to "flame." After the appearance of Memory as queen, we are at once introduced to the "realms of grace and harmony": apparently Queen Memory has nothing to do with these realms. In the very next line, however, we are back again with the "senses" which "serve" Memory. Then follow several trite metaphors: "warbled woe," "clouds of fragrance," and so forth. All at once, we return again; and Queen Memory seems to be accepting "tributary charms" from Nature and Art; and, as a grand climax, the flowers in "Fancy's clime," "Time's gems, cull'd by the Muse," "diffuse" their "blended beams" around Memory's "shrine," and suddenly, she is no longer a queen but a goddess! — A mixed metaphor, in itself, is not a sin if it pro-

[89] Jan., 1758, XVIII, 114 *et seq.*, especially 119.

[90] He notes the source as Afranius, *Works,* I, 19.

duces a clear effect upon the reader and if the passion of the piece justifies its mixture: neither condition is the case with Mason. His occasional figures are usually trite; his attempts at extended metaphor are regularly confused; and one feels that, after all, they are mere empty circumlocutions.

These faults were lasting. In the *Ode to the Naval Officers* (1779) Mason was still using label-personifications of Detraction, Death, Truth, Corruption, Interest, and all the rest. His metaphors were still wavering: Truth's "reign" has "floating bulwarks"; and, in the next line, Truth becomes "it," and "glows with unremitting ray." His words grow so convolved that the syntax of "aim" is uncertain and antecedents of pronouns become a matter of search and conjecture. The examples taken may be extreme; but they serve to show that Mason's tropes do not spring full-armed from the Muse's forehead but savor rather of the shoe-maker's last that Boileau recommended to his disciples. Even when Mason gets a good line, he manages to trail off the effect in a sad anticlimax. Take for example:

> And there the bittern in the sedge shall lurk,
> Moaning with sullen strain:
> While, sweeping o'er the plain,
> Destruction ends her work.[91]

If imagination did not supply Mason's tropes, where did they come from? Of course, the fashion of the time peppered its pages with the capital letters of personification, and regularly attached to a given noun the one particularly inoffensive adjective that convention had judged correct. There were, however, other influences, influences of Spenser and Milton, as we have already seen in *Musæus*. *Comus*, *Lycidas*, and *Paradise Lost* furnish figures to several of the odes.[92] Echoes of Gray are also numerous, sometimes in sufficiently literal form to be disentangled from the general strain of the "Grave-Yard School"[93]; or, again, the sug-

[91] *Ode VIII, On the Fate of Tyranny*, from Isaiah, XIV.

[92] Havens takes up at some length the influence of Milton on Mason, and finds his imitation of Milton's blank verse better than the average of the period (p. 375). He condemns *Il Bellicoso* and *Il Pacifico* as "flagrant" and "slavish" imitations (pp. 376 and 460), rather hard words for mere juvenile pieces.

[93] "Behold each neighboring monarch's tomb;
The trophied arch, the breathing bust."
—*The Fate of Tyranny*, cf. "Can storied urn," etc.

gestion is of *The Bard.*[94] In his versifications of Isaiah and Job, the figures are, of course, largely of Biblical origin. His lines are occasionally redolent of Dryden's ode on *Alexander's Feast*[95] and often have about them the turn of Pope's "dapper ditties"; indeed, Mason contains an interesting blend of not-always-harmonizing echoes.

The form of Mason's odes, I have dealt with at great length, partly to illustrate the literary psychology of the day, partly to show the curious way in which it worked itself out technically. Mason wrote at least five odes on the true Pindaric model, and was one of the beginners of the movement. His meter is rather monotonously regular as compared with that of Gray. As a melodist, he sacrificed rhyme-unity to liquid smoothness, and sense to alliteration: an unhappy choice which, all the more, accentuated his somnolence. His briefer figures are trite and sometimes directly borrowed; his longer comparisons are commonly cold and sometimes badly mixed. Even on a small scale, he had little architectonic power, except as the example of Pindar gave him a fortunate model; for the couplet had done much to destroy feeling for a large organic unity. His rhymes do not interlock into a unified scheme; his tropes do not cohere; and even his syntax is at times beclouded; he is groping his way toward more ample units than Pope; and he succeeds in writing no very unified units at all. The form of his poetry is bad; but the æsthetic effort for larger unity, notable in his ode-structure and in his extended tropes, and the effort to attain a subtler music, make his work a step toward a poetry, finer and more beautiful than Mason's age supplied.

The content of Mason's odes is less in advance of his age than is the form. Young, Thomson, Richardson, and their followers, had introduced into the literature of the day, the unmotivated, unethic emotionalism suggested by Shaftesbury's philosophy; and Mason, in the course of his odes, has struck upon his lyre almost every change of Sentimentalism. The very theme of five of his odes is instinct with pseudo-passion. His *Ode to Memory*, and

[94] "He spake, he died. Distain'd with gore
Beside yon yawning cavern hoar."
—*The Fate of Tyranny.*

"What tender warblings to my ear
On zephyrs born, aspire."
—*Ode XIII.*

[95] Mason shared Gray's admiration of Dryden. *Works*, I, 427.

the one *On Leaving St. Johns*, both aimlessly emotionalize the past with the yearning of green adolescence. The fourth ode expresses the young poet's sense of spiritual revolt at the vulgar marts of men, and implores "Fancy" to bear him back to the "sacred Leisure" of Cambridge. In *Ode VII*, somewhat in the stereotyped fashion of Young, he exchanges verbiage with a "Friend" on the decorous subject of "Melancholy." Mason, it seems, is quite an epicure in the lacrymose faculty, and declares a preference for pensive sentimentalizing on rural scenes, rather than the more strenuous horrors in the style of the Gothic romance. For Nature, moreover, he has great sympathy; and, in *Ode II*, he weeps over the sad case of a Water Nymph, the natural beauty of whose stream has been "disposed in a very false taste" by the vicious hand of "Art." [96] *Ode XI* repeats the theme. Indeed, for almost all his odes, Mason has dipped in the "bad books" of Sentimentalism; it was not for nothing that he imbibed Shaftesbury and Hutcheson at college and Ossian and Jean Jacques in his later years! *Independency* opens with "ruffling gales of grief"; his *Æolus's Harp* ode toys with a land of heart's desire where "all is Music, Ecstacy and Love," quite in the approved manner from Thomson's *Castle of Indolence* to Southey's Pantisocracy scheme and Shelley's *Revolt of Islam*. Indeed, Thomson had written a very similar ode with the same title. In *To a Water Nymph*, he boasts at least nine phrases, in eight lines, all connotative of Rousseauistic wallowing in self-complacent misery:

> There, if perchance I wake the love-lorn theme
> In melting accents querulously slow,
> Kind Naiad, let thy pitying stream
> With wailing notes accordant flow: [97]
> So shalt thou soothe this heaving heart
> That mourns a faithful Virgin lost;
> So shall thy murmurs and my sighs impart
> Some share of pensive pleasure to her ghost.

The characteristic sentimental treatment of an appropriate theme is well illustrated by the melancholy *Ode to a Friend*. In the

[96] How naturally the eighteenth century slips into the "pathetic fallacy"! Yet Cooper (98) declared that this *Ode* had "no rival in the court of Augustus."

[97] *Ibid.*

first strophe, the sophisticated and London-loving Mason declares that Music, Beauty, and Painting cannot lure him from the melancholic contemplation of "hollow gusts" and the "weeping rill." The rural and simple — especially when the twilight dims the rural and his own delicious emotions becloud the simple — allure his poetic soul with pleasing qualms; and he lapses at once into the style of Gray's *Elegy*. Strophe II is an introspective analysis of Mason's state of mind: a blending of "Fancy" and "Woe," in which he poetically luxuriates. It ends deep in the pathetic fallacy. The third strophe on "yon abbey dank and lone" was probably inspired by the rising taste for Strawberry Gothic, and perhaps also by the Castle of Orgoglio in *The Faerie Queene*.[98] He rhymes lone and stone, and tomb and gloom quite in the manner of Poe; and his "cloisters drear" and "desolated isle [*sic*]" shaken by "midnight thunders," show the piece a true harbinger of Walpole's *Otranto* and the novels of Radcliffe, Reeve, Lewis, Godwin, and the rest. But Mason prefers "fainter forms of sadness"; and, as he ended *Memory* with Milton and *Independency* with Marvell and D'Arcy, here he lets Gray supply a subdued *finale*, with another rhyme of tomb and gloom. Not without reason did Mrs. Delany characterize Mason's Muse as "harmonious and pathetic." [99]

Emotionally speaking, Mason's message is sentimental: intellectually, as he says in *Ode XV*, it is a plea for Liberty. The word at once calls up associations with the younger Coleridge and Wordsworth, with Byron and Shelley; but it was no such Revolutionary thing that the pensive Mason had in mind. He associated Liberty rather with the innocuous *coup d'état* of 1688, and, in the politics of his day, interpreted it as the triumph of the Whig party. Of his many odes on this theme, not one has even so wide an international or class outlook as Collins' *Ode* on the subject. "Liberty" to Mason meant that England should be free and prosperous, that the Whigs should control England, and that country gentlemen like himself should control the Whigs.[100] Almost every ode man-

[98] Bk. I, Canto VIII, st. xxxiv *et seq.* The "Grave Yard School," Young, Blair, Gray, *et al.*, had made the combination of melancholy, twilight, and ruins, popular. Keate's *Ruins of Netley Abbey* is an excellent example.

[99] Delany, *Autob.*, II, 250.

[100] I judge this last from his letters to Walpole in the early '80's on parliamentary reform. He does not seem to care for the support of the aristocracy; and, of the masses, he takes no notice at all.

ages to make a dubious rhyme with "Liberty," taken in this rather mild sense. The paraphrase from Job reflects the sincere, if somewhat arid, piety of Mason's old age, and defines wisdom, with Catholic orthodoxy, as "to refrain from sin and venerate thy God." This, at least, is neither sentimental nor insular nor bourgeois. But some nine are written in adulation of a "Liberty" that is intensely insular and bourgeois. *Ode V* honors Newcastle for his "sacred zeal for Freedom's cause." *Ode VI* starts in praise of "Independency," and ends by urging Mason to seek a "fair reward" in the smile of D'Arcy, his Whig patron. *Ode VIII* exults over the fall of tyranny and the liberty of the people.[101] *Ode X* is a supplication by the bards in *Caractacus* for a longer period of British freedom. *Ode XII* eulogizes Keppel for his independence of character and his recent victory over the French, in the cause of Liberty. *Ode XIII* is a message of censure and hope at the close of the American War. *Ode XIV* celebrates Pitt as champion of "the legal Rights of Man."[102] *Ode XV* is in honor of the Revolution of 1688 because it founded "the charter'd rights of British liberty." *Ode XVI* reminds one of Mavor's sonnet *To Liberty* and Coleridge's *Ode to France*: it was written in 1794, and voices an objection to the "abhorr'd Democracy" of the French Revolution.

If the substance of Mason's poetry is quite what one would expect from a confirmed sentimentalist and a patriotic Whig, the subjects show the unmistakable touch of eighteenth-century Romanticism. His *Æolus's Harp* looks back to Thomson and forward to the youthful Coleridge: they both wrote on the subject. The collections of Dodsley and Bell show infinite prototypes for his odes to abstractions. Smollett parallelled his *Ode to Independency*.[103] Mrs. Carter, Dr. Shepherd,[104] Tom Warton,[105] and John Ogilvie,[106] all wrote odes to Melancholy; James Beattie wrote over two hundred lines on its *Triumphs*,[107] the *Monthly* brought out an *Invocation*,[108] and it has been a stock theme of juvenile Roman-

[101] It was taken from the fourteenth chapter of Isaiah, and is sometimes referred to as *The Ode on the Fall of Babylon;* in Mason's *Works*, it appears as *On the Fate of Tyranny*.

[102] It was parodied in the *Poetical Miscellanies* of 1787, 1 *et seq.*

[103] Bell, XII, 103.

[104] Bell, XII, 143.

[105] *The Pleasures of Melancholy*.

[106] Ogilvie, *Poems*, London, 1762, 1.

[107] Beattie, *The Triumphs of Melancholy*.

[108] *Mon. Rev.*, LXXII, 306-308.

ticism from that day to this. As for Memory, that happy-hunting ground of the sentimentalist, Falconer added a passage on it in the second edition of his *Shipwreck*. Shenstone committed an ode[109]; Mavor, a sonnet; Samuel Rogers, *The Pleasures of Memory*[110]; *The Monthly Review* printed an anonymous ode with the same title, gave it a three-page review, and declared the "fertile theme," "by no means exhausted!" [111]

The importance of Memory is the subject of half of Wordsworth's best poetry, his *Solitary Reaper*, his *Daffodils*, his *Tintern Abbey Lines*, his *Skylark*, his *Elegiac Stanzas on Peele Castle* and his *Yarrow Visited*; it appears in the *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality* and enters into the *Prelude*. Tennyson evidently felt there was something still left to say when, two generations later, he committed to paper his own *Ode to Memory*. Certainly nothing unconventional is to be found in Mason's subjects.[112]

In neither theme nor substance can Mason's odes be particularly distinguished from reams of Romantic poetry: in tricks of technique he stands out somewhat more. He is a clever imitator of Pindar and a clever adapter of the Neo-classical tradition, a clever borrower from Milton and Gray, and, most of all, a clever prestidigitator of liquid rhymes and sweet alliterations. His craftsmanship was injudiciously directed and vain; but, to the technician, it is interesting.

Mason's age reacted unmistakably to these performances. The *Ode* on Newcastle's installation sung in the Cambridge Senate-House, was first published July 3, 1749.[113] *The Monthly Review* referred to it with critical modesty: "Our panegyrick odes have so near Sameness in them all, that we imagine our readers will excuse our quoting no passage from this; which is, however, looked upon as a very ingenious performance by the admirers of that species of poetry." [114] Gray considered it "the only Entertainment that had any tolerable Elegance" at the installation[115]; but, seemingly, it made very slight impression on "old Fobus" in whose

[109] Dodsley, IV, 338.

[110] See Clayden, 313.

[111] *Mon. Rev.*, June, 1792, VIII, n. s., 121.

[112] All these poems go to illustrate that Sir Edgerton Brydges is after all quite right in saying that such themes can give novelty only by varying their illustrations. (*Autobiography*, II, 63-64.)

[113] Straus, *Dodsley*, 339; also *Gent. Mag.*, XIX, 336.

[114] *Mon. Rev.*, I, 238.

[115] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 201.

honor it was intended.[116] The odes in *Elfrida* (1752) were much admired; and probably under this encouragement, Mason published a volume of non-dramatic odes on March 15, 1756.[117] The *Monthly* found the language "harmonious and flowing" — not a surprising discovery in view of the liquids and the alliteration — but condemned the "sentiments" as "neither new nor striking; and, what is worse [it continues] there is an obvious sterility of thought; nor do the thoughts themselves always arise from the subjects."[118] *The Critical Review* deemed the subjects well chosen, but found *To Memory*, not "striking," *To Melancholy*, disappointing, *On the Fate of Tyranny*, "infinitely below the divine original"[119]; but later declared that Mason versified Isaiah, XIV, better than Langhorne.[120] Preston voiced his objection to the restraining form of regular Pindarics[121]; and "Oxoniensis" objected to "mitred dullness" which he took as a reference to Bishop Parker.[122] The satires of Colman and Lloyd, the odes *To Obscurity* and *To Oblivion* addressed to Gray and Mason, have received their due mention. Churchill's *Prophesy of Famine* hit off the "one even tenor" of Mason's meter rather well[123] in his passage on bards "who neither sing nor say, Grave without thought, and without feeling gay." In his *Rosciad*, he again favors Mason, and again with some critical discrimination:

> Now should I, in some sweet poetic line,
> Offer up incense at Apollo's shrine,
> Invoke the Muse to quit her calm abode
> And waken Memory with a sleeping ode.[124]

The *Ode to the Naval Officers* (1779) occasioned a fairly favorable review in the *Critical*.[125] The *Monthly* found the opening "trite and puerile," but acknowledged that "with all its imperfections," the poem contained "what everything that comes from

[116] *Ibid.*, II, 7-8; Wordsworth in his *University Life in the XVIII Century*, questions Mason's sincerity in this ode; but the anti-Newcastle squibs he attributes to Mason are of dubious authorship (72, 616, 619).

[117] Straus, *Dodsley*, 359.

[118] *Mon. Rev.*, XIV, 434. Later it refers to Shenstone's *Ode to Memory* as better than Mason's.

[119] *Crit. Rev.*, I, 208-214.

[120] *Crit. Rev.*, XI, 467.

[121] *Europ. Mag.*, XIV, 172 *et seq.*, and 281 *et seq.* See Bibl. B.

[122] *Crit. Rev.*, I, 481.

[123] Churchill, *Prophesy of Famine*, 63-64.

[124] Churchill, *Rosciad*, Edinburgh, 1855, 11.

[125] *Crit. Rev.*, XLVII, 310-311.

Mr. Mason's pen must contain, many good lines, and manly sentiments." [126] The *Critical* damned it with faint praise because it was not "of that exalted species which affects the heart," [127] and an anonymous satirist parodied it in an *Ode to the Privateer Commanders of Great Britain* (1779). Mrs. Anne Radcliffe used Mason freely for poetic chapter-headings,[128] and Graves said that Shenstone wrote his *Ode on Rural Elegance* partly under Mason's influence.[129] Anna Seward, writing in 1797, found "sublimity" in the *Tyranny* ode, "picturesque charms and manly dignity" in *Independency*, and "wild original graces" in the *Water Nymph*.[130] His influence spread to America. In a foot-note to his poem *The Destruction of Babylon* (1774), John Trumbull refers to the "eminent British poet" Mason, and quotes from his eighth ode.[131] Buckminster praised him in his *Monthly Anthology*[132]; and Linn copied his odes.[133] They seemed to have lived on well into Victoria's reign; for Tooke in his edition of Churchill in 1854 quotes Mason's "appropriate and elegant tribute" to Marvell (*Ode to Independency*), merely for the sake of the literary allusion.[134]

Mason's odes were not great; but they had a larger historical significance than any of his other minor poems except perhaps *Musæus*. The revival of the true Pindaric form by a friend of Gray's as early as 1747, is of considerable interest, even though no influence on Gray by Mason can be proved. He was, however, an influence upon Southey[135]; and his effort at a more mellifluous verse stamps Mason as a humble forerunner of *Kubla Khan*, of Shelley, and of Poe. During the '40's the study of poetics was in the air; the old Latin system that attributed quantity to English verse was being modified by Manwaring, Harris, John Mason, and others, who were attacking the problem from a point of view musical rather than literary.[136] Mason's efforts at verse-melody

[126] *Mon. Rev.*, LXVII, 308-309.

[127] *Crit. Rev.*, LIV, 70.

[128] See Clara F. McIntyre, *Were the "Gothic Novels" Gothic*, *P.M.L.A.*, XXXVI, 665; e.g., chapters ix, xxxi, etc., in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*.

[129] Graves, *Shenstone*, 124.

[130] Seward, *Letters*, IV, 363.

[131] Trumbull, *Works*, II, 198. I owe this reference to the courtesy of Professor A. H. Nason.

[132] *Monthly Anthology*, July, 1808.

[133] *Camb. Hist. Am. Lit.*, I, 177-178. Rev. John Blair Linn (1777-1804) published *Miscellaneous Works*, 1795.

[134] Churchill, *Works*, Tooke ed., II, 172.

[135] Haller, *Southey*, 250.

[136] See Omond, *English Metrists*, 9 *et seq.* Omond is evidently referring to Edward Manwaring's *Of Harmony and Numbers . . . in English Poetry*, London, 1744, to James Harris's *Three Treatises*, London, 1744, and to John Mason's *Essay on the Power of Numbers*, London, 1749.

may have been an outgrowth of their influence; but, for that matter, Mason was a musician himself. Perhaps, on the other hand, he was merely doing to death the Neo-classical adjuration to be "smooth." As to content, he eulogizes his idea of "Liberty"; and, lacking that, lapses into sentimental cant about ruins or twilight, or water-nymphs weeping in rural scenery. His praise of liberty is a faint fore-sounding of the Byronic theme; and his mawkish Sentimentalism is still with us. His real merit is that of a technical experimenter, who unfortunately went wrong — an apt versifier who tried in vain to write the "pure poetry" of which he spoke.

What has been said of Mason's odes applies in general to his elegies. They are written in closed iambic-pentameter quatrains after the manner of Gray. The meter is hardly varied, and the many end-stopped lines lend a monotony akin to the poetic couplet. His verse melody again is of interest. Almost 52% of the rhymes are dominantly liquid or nasal, and alliteration rather sickishly sugars the verse. The following quotation from the *Elegy* to Miss Pelham shows the complexity of the design in stressed and unstressed syllables:

> *D*eign, *m*ournful *M*aid, while *o*'er yon *s*acred bier
> Thy *s*trea*m*ing *e*yes with *d*uteous *s*orrows *f*low
> *D*eign, *m*ournful *M*aid, to *l*end a *l*ist'ning *e*ar
> To *s*trains, that *s*well with *s*ympathetic woe.
> *A*ttend that Muse, *wh*o late in *h*appier *h*our
> *H*eard thy *s*oft voice its tuneful *p*owers em*p*loy,
> Where *D*'Ar*c*y call'd to Chiswick's *s*ocial bower
> *M*ild *m*irth, *a*nd polish'd *e*ase, and *dec*ent joy.[137]

Elegy V has thirty alliterating stressed syllables in its first twelve lines alone.[138] No wonder that Mason's age found him musical — if little else.

Mason's elegiac figures are no better than his odic. The *Elegy* to Miss Pelham, one of a number written upon her,[139] will serve as an example. "Duteous sorrows" is a rather faded metaphor for

[137] Of course, phonetic rather than orthographic values have been followed.

[138] On the other hand, one must, to a degree, admit Twining's praise (11-14) of the onomatopœia of the first four lines of this *Elegy*.

[139] Four are listed in the *Mon. Rev.*, X, 305.

tears; and the same may be said of the conventional personifications: "sympathetic woe," "mild mirth," "polish'd ease," "genial zephyrs," and "winter" smoothing his frown. This exhausts all the tropes in the first ten lines, except "lend a list'ning ear" which has been trite ever since Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. A little farther on, the Sun's crowning "the sullen brows of March with wreaths of May" is a pretty conceit; but "sullen" was probably chosen rather for the alliteration with Sun than for its appropriateness to March. On the whole, Mason is simply passing off, upon the public, the versification of conventionalized odds and ends. The situation is fairly characteristic of the eighteenth-century treatment of trope: an ample peppering of personification, a few faded metaphors, much circumlocution, with any further conventions that come to hand, and the "machinery" of the poem will do.

In Mason's elegies, as in his odes, sentiment supplies the warp of emotional substance; and, instead of the laudation of "liberty," fustian moralizing on Life, Death, and Immortality is the intellectual woof. None of the classic restraint of Hammond's *Love Elegies* appears in them: indeed, they are not classic at all; but, interpreting the elegy in its more modern sense, narrow its subject matter, as did those of Gray, to the limited compass of the "Grave-Yard School." In the first elegy, Mason, with all the vehemence of a rather sophisticated person, urges his "young nobleman" friend, on going out from the university, to retain all "the sweet simplicity of youth." He shakes a monitory finger at him, and threatens that, if he succumbs to "Art or Fashion," "these laureate honors" that he is giving him, will fade. The poet then points to the dreadful instances of Pope's St. John, "his Country's, his Religion's foe," and of Dryden's patrons, "titled rhymers and inglorious kings"; and the piece ends with some acid reflections on Art, Vice, Caution, Age, and Death. In his second elegy,[140] Mason is offering his sympathy to Miss Pelham on the occasion of her father's death. Only a few days previously, they all three had met at Lord Holdernesse's garden party at Chiswick. He describes the occasion; and then, without any very clear transition, his Muse conducts the "pensive" daughter to an allegorical "cypress grove," where Mason's "bolder arm" proceeds to "crop the laureat shade" with

[140] Written 1754, *Works*, I, 97.

intent to weave Pelham a "civic wreath." Thereupon, a celestial voice with "holy trill" [141] announces the "social love" and "public worth" of the deceased, and graciously invites him to heaven "on seraph wings upborn." The third elegy, *Written in the Garden of a Friend*,[142] is less severe. Just as he sentimentalized over his college days while they were in being, so, a few years after (1758), he summons the inevitable "Mem'ry" to help him play at *il penseroso* with the "garden," with the "friend," and with his own lost youth. The garden *motiv*, which appeared also in several of the odes, is of interest as foreshadowing his *English Garden*. He praises his friend's "rural arts," and then be-weeps his own neglect of them "misled by flattering Fortune's specious tale": — he had just accepted three valuable preferments, and he was about to accept several more. By his actions, we may judge his abhorrence of the wicked world, of opulent benefices, and of good port. The fourth elegy[143] is a dedication of *Caractacus* to Hurd. Beside the usual praise of "British liberty" and the usual reflection on "hirelings of the rhyming trade," the poem is notable for its really fine tribute to Shakespeare. The fifth elegy,[144] on the death of Lady Coventry, begins, in approved Romantic style, with the toll of the midnight clock, and then follows a plan reminiscent in large of *Lycidas*, only without its pastoral "machinery." The piece ends with an attack on philosophic infidelity. The last elegy, *Written in a Church-Yard in South Wales*,[145] is a belated specimen of Gray's influence, which Mason managed to "wear with a difference." [146] Gray and of course "Mem'ry" figure in it, and various other people and things, which Mason's "sons of toil" would probably have understood about as well as Wordsworth's peasantry understood his lucubrations.

Mason's elegies were rather less popular than his odes. They came out on December 7, 1762, and a second edition appeared

[141] This "holy trill" seems ludicrous, until one recalls the vocal style of the Handelian oratorios of the period.

[142] Criticized by Gray in the fall of 1757. Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 369. Most of the elegies had the benefit of Gray's criticism before publication. Was the "Friend" Shenstone?

[143] Written in 1759, *Works*, I, 104.

[144] Written in 1760, *Works*, I, 107. This lady was also immortalized as *The Fourth Grace*. See *Mon. Rev.*, XI, 399.

[145] Written in 1787, *Works*, I, 112. How far did the Graveyard School originate in the Calvinistic funeral elegy? See Ashton, *Social Life in the Reign of Queen Anne*, London, 1897, Ch. IV.

[146] In an extended note, he explains that Gray's *Elegy* is a "twilight scene," whereas his is in day time. Welsh local color adds some other variations.

three weeks later.[147] The *Critical* thought that they showed only "middling genius."[148] The *Monthly* found the first elegy "easy and unaffected"[149]; but "the renowned Martinus Scriblerus" contributed a slashing review. He describes the volume as "many flowers of different hues and essences, collected from the gardens and the fields of poesy, and disposed with *much visible Art and labor of Ornament*"; and he adds the following definition of the Masonian elegy: "I Martinus Scriblerus do assert that nature has nothing to do with the Elegy, and that it is a work of art alone. I profess it maketh me smile when I think of such absurdity. When a man writeth an Elegy, doth he not first pitch upon your rhymes [if possible liquid] that may correspond alternately? When this point is settled, doth he not seek words of fit measure and accent if possible alliterative to fill up the lines, after he hath disposed the rhymes one above the other? . . . Choice regard must be had principally to the harmony." *The Annual Register*, some years later, thought the *Elegies* lacking in simplicity, found the sentiments thinly scattered, though the lines "glitter with the glare of expression, and *a*mble *a*long by the *a*rtful *a*id of *a*lliteration"[150]; and Schomberg ridiculed their figures with considerable effect.[151] Certain elegies received individual criticism worthy of record: the compliment to Dryden in the *Elegy to a Young Nobleman*, appealed to John Scott as more beautiful than Gray's[152]; the *Elegy Written in the Garden of a Friend*, which had especial damnation from Martinus, is, in Tovey's opinion, "better than the average of Mason's work."[153] The *Elegy to Hurd* also appeared as the dedication of *Caractacus*, but it inspired little comment.[154] Madame D'Arblay advised a friend to read the *Elegy on Lady Coventry's Death*,[155] but complained that the "current of passion is somewhat interrupted by our attention to the rhyme."[156] The South Wales

[147] Straus, *Dodsley*, 378. The title-page date is 1763.

[148] *Crit. Rev.*, XIV, 447 *et seq.*

[149] *Mon. Rev.*, XXVII, 485 *et seq.* Elsewhere (VII, 237), the *Monthly* rather inappropriately put Hammond, Ovid, Tibullus, and Mason in the same class! The *Critical* (VII, 260) notes the paucity of elegiac literature in the mid-eighteenth century.

[150] *Ann. Reg.*, 1767, 220 *et seq.* The reference to "apt Alliteration's artful aid" is taken from Churchill's *Prophesy of Famine*, line 86. *The Ann. Reg.* reprinted Elegies I and II, 1762, 186 and 189; and Elegy I re-appeared in *Gent. Mag.*, XXXII, 592-593 (Dec. 1762).

[151] Schomberg, *Bagley*, 28.

[152] Scott, *Critical Essays*, 221.

[153] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 17.

[154] *The Ann. Reg.* reprinted it, 1759, 450-451.

[155] D'Arblay, *Diary*, I, 399.

[156] Graves, *Shenstone*, 111.

Elegy was reprinted by *The Annual Register* in 1804[157]; and, as late as 1842, *Fraser's Magazine* was comparing it with Gray's *Elegy* — not entirely to its disadvantage![158] The elegies could hardly be called a great success, even in their own time; but they are historically notable for the same technical mannerisms as the odes.

Mason's *Works* contain fourteen sonnets including the one at the beginning, dedicating his poems to Lord Holdernesse. They are all in the regular Italian form with octave and sestet; but three, II, III, and XI, lack the Petrarchan pause at the end of the eighth line. They are written in Mason's customary technique. Almost 54% of his rhymes are liquid or nasal, and there is as much alliteration as Mason's craftsmanship could pour into the mould. Most of the sonnets were composed late in life, and so are even barer and more nudely denotative than the odes and elegies; for, as time went on, he seems to have corrected the complicated luxuriance of some of his earlier works, to moribund frigidity. The themes are chiefly occasional, and the occasions are not very inspiring. In one sonnet, he dedicates his poems to Holdernesse; in another, he sends a young lady a copy of Dodsley's *Miscellanies* (containing some of his own poetry); he congratulates a friend on his wedding day; he resigns his chaplaincy to George III; he dedicates the dramatic form of *Caractacus*; he urges "a very young painter" to study the Greeks; he sonneteers Lord Jersey and Lord Harcourt at the beginning of his *Memoirs of Whitehead*; he writes sonnets on his last three birthdays, a sonnet to Warburton, two on gardens, and a final one defending Gray against the author of *The Progress of Civil Society*.[159] The sonnets seem to have received little attention from critics, save that *The Monthly Review* quoted the one to Lord Holdernesse.[160] Their relation to Milton is obvious; and the first one, written in 1748, is probably attributable to the influence and example of Edwards' sonnets in the first edition of Dodsley's *Miscellanies*.

Of Mason's remaining poems, little need be said. They consist of epitaphs and inscriptions, a few juvenile attempts, and a number of religious poems and translations. They show the same general

[157] *Ann. Reg.*, 1804, 917-919.
[158] *Fraser's Mag.*, XXV, 549-550.
[159] See *Mod. Lang. Rev.*, VI, 387, and Walpole *Letters*, Toynbee ed., Suppl. II, 188-192.
[160] *Mon. Rev.*, XXX, 67; Jan., 1764.

characteristics as the odes, elegies, and sonnets. The epitaph in Bristol Cathedral *On Mrs. Mason,* done in quatrains, is notable for its fine climax supplied by Gray.[161] The one on Archbishop Drummond's daughter, written in the same form, is appropriate, if not remarkable. The run-on couplets on Dr. Dealtry are a seemly, if not an especially impressive, performance. The quatrains on Mrs. Tatton have a smug monotony of meter, accentuated by the facile personifications and the bald moral at the end; the one on Gray is reasonably happy in its phrasing; and those on Dean Fountayne's son are weighted down with Patience, Honor, Fortitude, Truth, Fortune, Science, and what-not. In the two quatrains placed over "Capability" Brown, the landscape gardener, art-amateurs are called upon to "weep the Christian, Husband, Father, Friend!" Those on Mrs. Morritt and those on the poet Whitehead are without distinction; and the satirical couplets on the literary forgers are rather flat. These epitaphs and inscriptions have a certain quaint interest if one reads them in an old churchyard; but, as literature, they count for little.

The juvenile miscellanies are worth brief mention. *The Birth of Fashion, an Epistolary Tale* in tetrameter couplets is a clever *tour de force* for an undergraduate. In a flippant tone, perhaps borrowed from *The Rape of the Lock,* Mason tells how Proteus got Fashion upon Venus. *Il Bellicoso* and *Il Pacifico* are rather boyish imitations of Milton; they were, however, praised by Drake as late as 1800.[162] In the heroic couplets addressed to his father, Mason thanks him for his artistic sympathy and suggestions, and in return promises to avoid infidelity and "Fashion's frippery." The *Stanzas Written on the Banks of the Cam* are in somewhat similar strain; one of them is perhaps worth quoting to show how, even as early as 1746,[163] he was using regular meter, alliteration, and liquid rhymes reinforced by a repetition, not so much for word-emphasis, I suspect, as for the sonorous effect:

> High o'er my head, the Solar sphere
> Flung far and wide his sparkling beams;
> His sparkling beams as bright appear
> Reflected from the silver streams.

[161] See Gray-Nicholls *Correspondence,* 39-40, and Gray *Letters,* Tovey ed., III, 138, especially note 1. It was reprinted in *The Ann. Reg.,* 1777, 211-212.

[162] Drake, *Literary Hours,* II, 92.

[163] *Works,* I, 176.

Mason's *Isis*, written in heroic couplets, is a rather tiresome attack on Oxford for its Jacobitism.[164] It first appeared, February 6, 1749, and ran through three editions in "a very short time."[165] The *Monthly* called it a proof of Mason's "genius for plaintive poetry."[166] Young Thomas Warton answered it in *The Triumph of Isis*, and "a Gentleman of Cambridge," in *The Praises of Isis* (1755), which was called by the *Monthly*, an "elegant" compliment to Oxford.[167] Mason's alterations of Prior's *Protogenes and Apelles* show Mason the pedant of painting; and the *Ode to Casimir* with its Æolus's harp, again exemplifies his eternal repetition of a few themes. *The Song of Harold the Valiant* is interesting as a stilted mid-eighteenth-century translation[168] of saga material. It was intended to illustrate Gray's projected *History of English Poetry*,[169] but is not particularly illustrative of either popular or Icelandic literature.[170] These poems, in general, show the same qualities that were evident in the odes, the elegies, and the sonnets. The proportion of liquid rhyme, to be sure, falls a little below one half; but Mason's craftsmanship was not yet developed. Alliteration is freely used; the meter has little variety; the images are cold; the ideas, thin; and the emotion is conventional or sentimental or both.

A few religious poems of Mason's last years, remain to be briefly discussed. His *Religio Clerici*, written in imitation of Dryden, gives his religious point of view in 1796. It is interesting to see how Sentimentalism has so permeated him that he slighted somewhat the Athanasian Creed, and founded his faith largely on a vague benevolence.[171] But the Thirty-nine Articles worried him at times[172]; and he had no patience with those worthies of the

[164] This charge was fairly well founded. See Mant, *Memoirs*, in Thomas Warton, *Works*, xv; Wordsworth, *English Universities*, 61-63; and *Mon. Rev.*, XII, 141, 396.

[165] Straus, *Dodsley*, 115 and 337-338.

[166] *Mon. Rev.*, VI, 387. "*Com*plaintive" would have been a more appropriate adjective to apply to Isis than "plaintive."

[167] *Ibid.*, XII, 107-109.

[168] Mason did not know any more Old Norse than Gray. (See Kittredge on Gray's Old Norse in Phelps' *Selections from Gray*). Mason translated his *Harold* from either the Latin of Bartholinus or the French of Mallet (*Works*, I, 196); or possibly he merely versified the prose of Percy, *Five Pieces of Runic Poetry*, London, 1763.

[169] For other translations, see W. Herbert, *Select Icelandic Poetry*; A. Seward, *Works*, III, 29 etc.

[170] Farley, *Scandinavian Infl.*, 30 *et seq.*, 82.

[171] *Works*, I, 430.

[172] *Religio Clerici*, *Works*, I, 430, line 84 *et seq.*

French Revolution who knew no "creed" or "law"; and he damned them together with the arch-heretic, Arius. His faith is based, in the Protestant fashion, on "scripture"[173]; and so he condemns "Papists." He exalts the Trinity, and so has little use for Unitarianism.[174] The *Second Part* is aimed especially at the latter point of view, which was very prominent in the 1790's. He advises Unitarians to purge their brains of heresy by reading Jones, Burgh, Cleaver, Horseley, and Hurd; and he adds a dozen pages of notes to drive his point home. His four hymns, the first two set to music by Dr. Burney and Mr. Camidge,[175] are rather bald conventionalities phrased in monotonous quatrains; and his fourteen versifications of the *Psalms* are better only in so far as the beauty of the originals is still apparent.

In lyric poetry, Mason constitutes a minor figure; but he stands at the dawn of its renaissance. The interest of his work is largely technical. The formal imitations of Chaucer, Spenser, Milton; his part in the revival of the sonnet and of the ode; the effort for richer verse-melody, evident in his many and extended alliterations and in sensuous liquid rhymes: these are all significant steps in the progress toward Coleridge and Shelley. He had little to say and no great wealth of imagination with which to express it; but he voiced the ideals of his age: readers of Richardson liked his sentiment; good Whigs approved his politics; and Society and the critics could hardly condemn so decorous a poet. It is, however, no wonder that his work had about it "something labored and not arising naturally." The quotation from Dionysius is all too apt. His poetry is of the workshop; and one is not surprised to learn that he filled out his lines after half-writing them, and to hear him admit to Harcourt that he palmed off versification upon a public that, having read little that was better, accepted it as poetry. Mason's lyrics go through all the motions essential to Romanticism; but his work does not carry conviction because he was not essentially Romantic in his life and action and mode of thought; the Romantic note in his work is, therefore, a mere *simulacrum*, an affectation rather than an essence. Even the Corinthian restraint of *The*

[173] Lines 133 and 265 for example—not on the Church, as Pusey would have said. For Mediæval theology, he had no understanding or use (lines 215 *et seq.*).

[174] *Works*, I, 433. [175] *Ibid.*, 468.

Bard was denied him; for his technique was too coarse: he experimented roughly with effects that Shelley was to consummate. Mason represents a generation that was looking toward the Romanticism of life and of art, but that really attained neither.

CHAPTER IX

MASON'S DRAMAS

OF Mason's dramas, five have come down to us in print: *Elfrida* and *Caractacus*,[1] tragedies on the Greek model, both of some moment in the literary and stage history of their day; *Argentile and Curan*, a romance in the Elizabethan manner; and two "lyrical" libretti, *Sappho* and *Pigmalion*, the latter a translation from the prose of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. That Mason wrote at least one other tragedy, *The Indians*, is certain; but it was never printed or produced. The historical background was the destruction of the native kingdom of Zaragua in the Island of Haiti in 1505. Mason writes that the play is "too horrid for the stage" and that his purpose in it was to combine French exactitude with absorbing incident.[2] Characteristically enough, the purpose was a technical one; for, in his dramas as in his poetry, he was above all the experimenter. His two comedies, likewise, *The Surprise* and *The World of Today*, although Walpole praised them, never gained the light of either press or stage[3]; and one can only guess that they were satires. The present study is necessarily limited to a discussion of the published works.[4]

The period was not one of great drama. The Elizabethan tradition had almost worn itself out with the horrors of mad Nat Lee and his fellows of the Restoration.[5] Collier's attack had largely silenced the prevailing comedy of high life and low morals. Then Sir Robert Walpole had forced partisan politics off the stage; and so, little was left except spineless sentiment after the manner of

[1] For a note on this name in some of its Welsh and Breton relationships, see Cradock, *Memoirs*, 82.

[2] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VIII, 427, 443. He was writing the play in 1783.

[3] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., I, 404-407. He was writing these in 1761. All these plays probably exist in MS. either among the Mitford MSS. in Brit. Mus. or at Aston.

[4] He finished Whitehead's *Œdipus*; see Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 882, n; but Mason did not, apparently, think it even important enough to include in his supplementary volume of Whitehead's *Works*, York, 1788. It was, however, published. See Davies, *York Press*, 304.

[5] Thorndike's *Tragedy* gives an excellent sketch of the period. See 267, 278, etc.

Cibber. Subject-matter seems, as is common in decadent periods, to have engrossed the attention of the authors far less than form; and the most vital dramatic issue of the day was the struggle between the native semi-Elizabethan technique and the pseudo-classical manner derived chiefly from the theory of Castelvetro and Boileau and from the practice of Racine and Voltaire.

Elfrida and *Caractacus* are interesting as notable attempts at a truer classicism.[6] They are at once Mason's earliest and his most influential works, and, as such, must be treated at some length. *Argentile and Curan* is interesting as a more purely Elizabethan work than one might expect to find in the eighteenth century; but it was not published until late in Mason's life,[7] when the heyday of his fame was far obscured by the forward strides of Romanticism. *Sappho* and *Pigmalion* are of less consequence.

Mason himself summarized the plot of *Elfrida*, perhaps as justly as can be done in brief space:

> Edgar, King of England, having heard the beauty of Elfrida, daughter of Orgar Earl of Devonshire, highly celebrated, sent his favorite Minister Athelwold to the father's castle to discover whether she was really so beautiful, as fame reported her to be; and if she was, to offer her his Crown in marriage. Athelwold, on seeing her, fell violently in love with her himself; and married her; conveying her soon after to his own castle in Harewood Forest, where he visited her by stealth from court; and in his absence left her with a train of British Virgins, who form the Chorus. After three months, Orgar, disapproving this confinement of his daughter, came disguised to Harewood to discover the cause of it. His arrival opens the Drama. The incidents which are produced by Athelwold's return from court (who was absent when Orgar came to his castle), and afterwards by the unexpected visit of the king, form the Episode of the Tragedy; the feigned pardon of Athelwold, drawn from the king by the earnest intercession of Elfrida, brings on the Peripetia, or change of fortune; and the single combat between the king and Athelwold, in which the latter is slain, occasions Elfrida to take the vow, which completes the Catastrophe.[8]

Mason gives the old story[9] in its barest form, and does not seem to have been influenced by any of the previous dramatizations of

[6] *Ibid.*, 297.
[7] The *Poems* of 1797.
[8] *Works*, II, 3.
[9] Ward, II, 610, n. 2, says it comes from the old *Song of King Edgar, showing how he was deceived of his love.* Ravenscroft, in his introduction to *King Edgar and Alfrida, a tragi-comedy*, London, 1677, says he got it from "English Chronicles," and remarks that "Several foreign authors" have used the story.

the subject. It is hardly to be supposed that he had in mind *A Knack to Know a Knave*, 1594, a comedy based in part upon a perverted form of the Elfrida story,[10] nor did he use Greene's *Friar Bacon* or Massinger's *Grand Duke of Florence*, both containing similar suggestions. Ravenscroft's "tragi-comedy," *King Edgar and Alfrida*, 1677, is more likely to have come under his consideration; but the management of the plot is quite different.[11] Rymer's *Edgar or the English Monarch*, 1678, one might expect, from the classical tenets of its author,[12] to be more similar to Mason; but, although the dramaturgy is Greek in its unities of time and place, the play, with its anachronisms, its complicated pageantry, and its Danish, Scotch, and French royalty, is rather far both from the true Greek form and from Mason's *Elfrida*.

Aaron Hill began his career as playwright with *Elfrid*, 1710.[13] His version of the story has more of actual Greek simplicity than Rymer, and, in its sub-plot, is suggestive of Ravenscroft[14]; but the faithlessness of Elfrida to Athelwold is a *motiv* that does not occur at all in Mason; and the Egbert-Ordelia plot, on which Hill makes the play turn, is omitted by Mason, somewhat to the detriment of his motivation. Hill redramatized the story of Athelwold in 1731; and, with much acclaim and great expense of "Anglo-Saxon" costume and machinery, brought it on the stage.[15] He complicated the plot and "raised" the king's character, but the performance was an expensive failure. Very probably, Mason knew of this play, but it does not seem to have affected his work. In short, Mason's drama seems not to have been especially influenced by earlier dramatizations; and indeed, Genest thought his management of both plot and style "very superior to that of his predecessors." [16]

[10] Fleay, *Biog. Ch. of the Eng. Drama*, II, 310, ascribes this part of the play to Peele.

[11] Whereas Mason plunges *in medias res*, Ravenscroft gives Act I to the marriage of Ethelwold and Elfrida, Act II to the betrayal of the situation to the King by Elfrida's brother, and finally in Act III comes to the King's visit with which Mason's drama opens.

[12] One must not forget Rymer's *Tragedies of the Last Age, Considered and Examined by the Practices of the Ancients and the Common Sense of All Ages*. See Genest, *Eng. Stage*, I, 223-225.

[13] See Brewster, *Aaron Hill*, Columbia Univ. diss., N. Y., 1915, 81 *et seq.*

[14] Hill's sub-plot of Ordelia and her two lovers may have been suggested by Ravenscroft's sub-plot of Aldernald and Matilda.

[15] Brewster, *Aaron Hill*, 114 *et seq.*

[16] Genest, *Eng. Stage*, V, 360.

In the case of *Caractacus*, we pass from Anglo-Saxon to Celtic antiquity.[17] Mason himself summarizes the plot as follows[18]:

> Caractacus, King of the Silures, having been defeated by Ostorius, the Roman Præfect, his queen taken prisoner, and his son (as it is supposed) either slain or fled, retired with his only daughter, and took sanctuary amongst the Druids in Mona. Ostorius, after the battle, leaving garrisons in the conquered country, marched to subdue the northern part of Britain, and led his troops to the frontiers of the Brigantes, then governed by Cartismandua. This queen, dreading the victorious enemy, made a truce with him; one of the conditions of which was that she should assist the Romans in securing the British king, that he might be carried to Rome to grace the triumph of Claudius. She accordingly, gave up her two sons as hostages, to be sent themselves to Rome, in case they did not seduce Caractacus from his sanctuary, to which place they were to be accompanied by Aulus Didius, and a sufficient force to effect that design.
>
> The Drama opens on their arrival in the consecrated grove, a little before midnight, and about the time when the Druids, who form the Chorus, were preparing the ceremonial of Caractacus's admission into their order. The two princes are seized as spies; and the incidents, consequent upon this, form what is called the Episode of the piece. The Exode, or Catastrophe, is prepared by the coming of Arviragus the king's son, who, having escaped with life in the late battle, had employed the intermediate time in privately collecting his father's scattered forces, to put him again into a condition of facing the enemy. His bravery, in defending his father and the Druids, occasions the Peripetia, or change of fortune; and his death, with the final captivity of Caractacus, concludes the Tragedy.

This Celto-Roman story, like the Anglo-Saxon plot of *Elfrida*, has furnished a number of plays to the English stage. Mason probably knew the *Bonduca* of Beaumont and Fletcher.[19] The plays credited to the joint authors were a vital part of the stage-history of his day; and *Bonduca* has never been forgotten: Purcell made a musical setting of it in 1695[20] and adaptations were made by Powell in 1696, by Colman in 1778,[21] and by Planché in 1837.

[17] The Cornish Elfrida had already suggested "Druids" and "Groves of British oak" (*Works*, II, 20).

[18] *Works*, II, 79.

[19] Very likely by Fletcher alone. For this list of plays, see Ward, II, 60.

[20] See Romain Rolland, *Histoire de l'Opéra*, Paris, 1895, 300.

[21] Colman's was played in 1778 (see *D.N.B.*), but seemingly not printed until 1796. It should not be confused with the *Bonduca* printed in 1778 in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Works*, edited probably by Colman.

I find, however, no trace of Beaumont and Fletcher in Mason. Other authors, moreover, had been inspired by the patriotic theme, to try fresh dramatizations of the material. Howard's *Bonduca* (1669) and Hopkins' *Boadicea* (1697) do not appear to have influenced Mason[22]; but Glover's *Boadicea* (1753) with its Aristotelian simplicity[23] may be a source of Mason's Greek technique; for the play was written and apparently staged long before its publication.[24] Even more like Mason must have been Cumberland's juvenile *Caractacus*: it was founded upon the identical story and modelled after Mason's own *Elfrida*[25]; but, apparently, it was never printed, and Mason could hardly have known anything of it. Mason's play appeared in 1759. In an effort to obtain Romantic local color, he seems to have worked afresh from his sources; and even Tovey, after discussing the parallel passages of Tacitus and Mason, calls his adaptations "not unskilful." [26]

The narrative-origins of Mason's plots were old; but he followed his own method of dramatization. Before we pass on to more formal matters, such as his management of plot, characterization, and setting, it is necessary to make clear just what larger import Mason seems to have attached to these stories as he worked them into artistic form.

Elfrida is obviously one of the "she-tragedies," [27] the sentimental scions of the new spirit of the age. It presents the pleasing aspect of virtue in distress, and was calculated to bring any eighteenth-century audience to tears.[28] Dobson, not ineptly, compares Athelwold's death to that of Richardson's Lovelace.[29] The Chorus,

[22] Doran, *Their Majesties' Servants*, III, 3, mentions a ballet on the subject written about this time by D'Egville, which was very popular.

[23] At least so says the anonymous author of *Some Few Recollections on the Tragedy of Boadicea*, London, 1753; and, in actual fact, the dramaturgy and "props" seem less complex than was common in that rococo period.

[24] As early as the spring of 1742, Gray wrote to Chute of Glover's *Boadicea* "preparing for the stage." "It is a fine subject," says Gray, "but I have not an extreme opinion of him." Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 107-108.

[25] Cumberland, *Memoirs*, 59. The subject is still alive; e.g., Elgar's recent cantata *Caractacus*.

[26] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 363-364.

[27] The expression is from the *Epilogue* to Rowe's *Jane Shore*:

"If the reforming stage should fall to shaming,
Ill-nature, Pride, Hypocrisy and Gaming;
The Poets frequently might move Compassion,
And with She-Tragedies o'er-run the Nation."

[28] See Thorndike, *Tragedy*, 279, 284, 290.

[29] *Nat. Rev.*, LIX, 286.

quite in the vein of Jean-Jacques, tells Elfrida that Athelwold is quite right in shielding her from courts and cities where the "nauceous scene of pageantry and vice" will rob her of the "delicate soft tints of innocence." [30] Perhaps the most quintessential passage is the following. The Chorus is condoling with Orgar's feigned tribulation:

> We know,
> There oft is found an avarice in grief;
> And the wan eye of Sorrow loves to gaze
> Upon its secret hoard of treasured woes
> In pining solitude. Perhaps thy mind
> Takes the same pensive cast: if not, permit
> That we, in social sympathy, may drop
> The tender tear.[31]

In short, *Elfrida* is the true "she-tragedy" of the period, pathetic without ethos, tearful usually without cause: its subject was immaculate virtue in dire straits; and its method, Sentimentalism.[32] It belongs clearly to that current of eighteenth-century literature that turned comedy into farce and tragedy into melodrama.

Thorndike points out that the two themes which most pleased the age were "the distressed female and the patriotic moralizer." [33] If *Elfrida* expressed the former, *Caractacus* is a voicing of the latter. Ignoring the fact that Caractacus is a Celtic and not an Anglo-Saxon figure at all, Mason, like the dramatists of the Boadicea story, has built him up into a symbol of English patriotism, "To fight the cause of liberty and Britain." [34] Had he dared, he would probably have added further spice from partisan politics; but the good old days of Fielding's comedies were over; and Walpole's censorship had banished contemporaneous affairs from the stage. Even so, however, a political sense may wilfully have been read into Mason's play; for, at a Whig meeting in Shropshire in 1776 to protest against the American War, there were read some *Additional Lines to Caractacus*, apparently not by Mason, which

[30] *Works*, II, 17-18.

[31] *Works*, II, 10. One is not surprised to find Bernbaum pointing out a revival of sentimental comedy in the '50's and '60's. *Drama of Sensibility*, ch. XI.

[32] It is indeed interesting to note how the wrongs of a woman were slowly generalized in eighteenth-century art, into *The Wrongs of Woman* set forth by Mary Wollstonecroft and more or less iterated ever since.

[33] Thorndike, *Tragedy*, 291.

[34] *Works*, II, 104.

urged conciliation and greater liberty for the colonies.[35] From our point of view, however, and I believe from Mason's, the interest of the drama was rather in the form than in the contents. At least, his dedicatory *Elegy* to Hurd suggests that, like so much decadent art, the piece is more a study in technique than an expression of any vitalized thought or emotion:

> Bring then to Britain's plain that choral throng,
> Display thy buskin'd pomp, thy golden lyre,
> Give her historic forms the soul of song,
> And mingle Attic pomp with Shakespear's fire.[36]

The dramaturgy of both *Elfrida* and *Caractacus* is Greek: the unities are strictly observed; and the chorus[37] plays the part at once of the expositor of the action and a participant in it. Indeed, without a chorus to get him over the rough places, Mason could hardly have managed *Elfrida* with only five solo characters, and *Caractacus* with six. The odes, however, like some of those in Euripides, have little relation to the plot; but I doubt whether Mason took his dramaturgy directly from the Greek: Dacier and Rymer,[38] and especially Thomson[39] and Glover[40] supplied models readier to hand.

The Elfrida story, in Mason's version, is reduced to bare essentials; and there is a lucid simplicity about his plotting. The choric odes divide the play into acts; and each section thus set off has a definite subject of its own. The fifteen pages up to the second ode[41] are exposition: first Orgar and the Chorus, then Elfrida and the Chorus explain the circumstances of Elfrida's marriage to

[35] See *Gent. Mag.*, XLVI, 427. *Elfrida* has some suggestion of a political *Tendenz*: The objection to "pageantry and courts" and again "pageantry and vice" of courts (*Works*, II, 11, 18, etc.) suggests the Whig attitude inherited from the Revolution of 1688; and the reference to "the savage inroads of base hinds That sallied frequent from the Scottish heights," is rather apropos, so soon after Prince Charlie's invasion from the North.

[36] Prefaced to the edition of 1760; given among the *Elegies* in Mason's *Works* of 1811.

[37] One wonders just what relation in the æsthetic consciousness of the day, Mason's choruses bore to the occasional lyrics which came down as part of Elizabethan stage tradition and usurped so important a place in *The Beggars' Opera* and its numerous progeny.

[38] See G. B. Dutton in *P.M.L.A.*, XXIX, 182 *et seq.*

[39] Especially the *Agamemnon*; see Léon Morel, *James Thomson, sa vie et ses œuvres*, Paris, 1895, 558 *et seq.*

[40] See Haller, *Southey*, 80 *et seq.*

[41] *Works*, II, 20 *et seq.* The first ode occurs almost at the play's beginning.

Athelwold and of her subsequent concealment at his castle in Harewood Forest. A play on the Greek plan[42] characteristically plunges *in medias res*; and the great problem of technique is the skilful interweaving of the exposition with some action or other matter of interest. Mason's opening, without action, depends on its sheer poetic quality; and, were that quality present to a larger degree, one might still praise his work as closet-drama. As it is, one wonders how an audience stood the arid waste of declamation. Well might Elizabeth Montagu declare that *Elfrida* was a "Drama not dramatized." [43] Even during the twelve pages before the next ode, the only significant event is the news of the King's arrival. Athelwold, to be sure, confesses to Elfrida that he had deceived Edgar as to her charms; but this admission has little dramatic significance,[44] and might as well be so much more exposition. At last, when about half the play is over, Orgar, who has seemingly overheard Athelwold's confession, reveals himself to Elfrida, commands her to play traitor to the husband to whom he himself wed her, and to go and dress herself gorgeously in hopes of catching the King's fancy! And the strangest part of it is that she actually obeys him, while the first Semichorus comments: "Horror! Horror!" [45] Edgar arrives; and Athelwold enters with him. Orgar re-enters, and denounces Athelwold: indeed, Pandarus was not more busy with Cressida than Orgar in arranging the affairs of his daughter. The King finally goes out with him, to be convinced that Athelwold actually deceived him as to Elfrida's charms. Athelwold tells the audience that he expects the worst and makes an exit for no particular reason except that the Chorus is to begin another ode. Two triads, strophe, antistrophe, and epode, being over, Athelwold returns with Edwin; and we learn that the former is to be banished for his deception. The King, Elfrida, and her father, come in: Edgar is supposed to be madly in love with Elfrida; but he treats her like a naughty child when she pleads

[42] Mason discussed Greek dramaturgy and the propriety of his chorus in five letters, *Works*, II, 177. Late in life, moreover, he inserted general remarks of a Neo-classical cast on "tragic style" in his *Memoirs of Whitehead* in Whitehead, *Poems*, III, 56 *et seq.*

[43] Elizabeth Montagu, *Letters*, ed. Climenson, II, 161.

[44] Cf. Hill's *Elfrid* in which Elfrida, the "fair inconstant," turns against her husband when he tells her of his deception of the king which made possible her marriage to himself.

[45] *Works*, II, 42.

for Athelwold. Orgar keeps discreetly silent: one wonders what he would have had to say for himself if Mason had let him speak; one would expect him, under the circumstances, to feel a bit of embarrassment! Edgar yields to Elfrida's entreaties, and appears to pardon Athelwold. The reader has no way of realizing that this pardon is not perfectly sincere and complete; for, indeed, King Edgar has no motive for simulation. They go out to hunt; and Orgar, after damning his daughter's constancy with all the thoroughness, though none of the poetry, of *The Cenci,* goes out to kill her husband. In order to give time for dire events off stage, Elfrida and the Chorus declaim about the situation. Then Edwin comes in, and tells how the King has killed Athelwold; Orgar comes back, hears of it, and is at once reconciled to the disconsolate Elfrida; and (most ridiculous of all) seems willing to avenge Athelwold! Edgar is pictured as too overwhelmed in tears to venture on the stage again; and Elfrida takes the last six pages to decide to enter a convent.

The articulation between plot and characterization utterly breaks down. Motives for the chief actions are woefully inadequate. Is Orgar at once such a villain and such a cad as to turn against his son-in-law simply because he sees he might have made a better match for his daughter? Surely Athelwold's sin, prompted by love, was a forgivable deceit. Is Elfrida such a weakling and such an egregious fool as to array herself richly at her father's command, and so help his miserable plot? The speed with which King Edgar falls in love, and fights and kills his adversary, stamps him at once as a figment of the old heroic drama: moreover, if he was going to kill Athelwold, surely his passionate nature would have made him do it at once, and not, complying with Mason's Greek dramaturgy, simulate forgiveness in order to remove the combat and death behind the scenes. The motives being thus ill worked out, the characters themselves have all the unreality of Romantic drama, and, indeed, are not even consistent types. Orgar is the loving father in the earlier part of the play when he comes to Harewood to inquire after Elfrida's welfare; but he later turns into the ambitious noble, and without a qualm, sacrifices his daughter's happy married life to the chance of placing her on the throne. Athelwold is a lover-of-straw; Elfrida, a shilly-shally; and the

King, a compound of blood and thunder and heroics such as not even a pathological novelist would tolerate in his pages to-day. Suffice it to say that the play breaks down as to plot, shows no remote conception of character or the motives that govern human beings, and, aiming exclusively at sentimental *pathos*, loses all touch of *ethos* so utterly that the *pathos* itself becomes ridiculous. *Samson Agonistes* and *Britannicus* (not to mention Euripides) may have reduced plot to a minimum and character to little more than type; but what they have is at least consistent and vertebrate; and Shelley's *Prometheus* has an allegorical significance that gives a fine precision of structure; but Mason's æsthetic microcosm is a chaos. His Greek dramaturgy with its three unities doubtless hampered him; but, if the dramaturgy of the play be Greek, the characters, far from being figures of royal rank and austere composition, as Aristotle teaches, are purely a concession to the sentimental school of Rowe and Lillo.

The dramaturgy of *Caractacus* is rather better. The play opens in the sacred grove where the Romans have secretly disembarked with their two British hostages, Vellinus and Elidurus, princes of the Brigantes. Aulus Dedius, the Roman general, reveals to them the plan by which they must lure Caractacus into his hands; and thereupon the two disagree as to whether they will do so or not. The arrival of the Chorus of Bards makes them flee by different ways; but Vellinus is determined to betray Caractacus. After several semichorals, antiphonal to one another, Caractacus and his daughter Evelina enter; and the chorus start to initiate Caractacus into their Druidical order. Meanwhile, for no very obvious reason, he relates the capture of his queen and the flight of his son, Arviragus.[46] The Chorus tries to silence him with a few generalities on Patience. But he rises above their cold comfort, and, in two rather fine speeches, tells of his desire to revenge his queen. The ceremonial commences. Then into the midst of the company intrude Vellinus and Elidurus, and, in spite of the Chief Druid, persuade Caractacus to come away to save (they say) their mother's kingdom. The scene might be effective were it not so worn out

[46] This, of course, constitutes the preplay of the tragedy. The fact that it is inserted in the midst of the action, constitutes some technical advance over *Elfrida*, where it was put first.

with words. Finally, the Chief Druid packs them off the stage; and, with the help of an ode by Mador, one of the bards, he prepares to have a vision. The vision is unpropitious; and Evelina, returning, declares she suspects Vellinus, because his brother seemed to behave so strangely. The Druids plan to put Elidurus to a magic test; but Evelina, who seems to have aroused the tender passion in his susceptible heart, first questions him, and is on the point of extracting a confession when her brother Arviragus arrives, commanding the remnant he has saved of Caractacus' armies. The suspense is thus sustained and a new element of complexity introduced. Arviragus, after a lengthy description of his own doings, finally mentions the pressing news that the Romans are even then at hand. A Semichorus, in true Elfridian strain, cries: "Horror! Horror!" and at once threatens Elidurus with torture. The immediate complications, rather effective, even if not fully motivated, end in Elidurus' and Arviragus' joining against the Romans. The former is borne off by the priests to be purified for battle. The latter remains on the stage, and is reconciled to his father who conveniently appears for the purpose. Meanwhile, the Britons are mustering, and Vellinus has fled back to the Romans. Thereupon, for no very apparent reason, the Druids decide to kill Elidurus. Evelina begs his life; and the Druids at once forgive him and send him to be armed. The sword of Trifingus is especially borrowed from Norse mythology[47] in order that Caractacus may be girded with it at this dramatic moment. After much talk, the warriors go forth to battle, and the Chorus chants the Ode: "Hark! heard ye not the footstep dread," probably the best lines Mason ever wrote. Caractacus returns; the Romans have fled, leaving many dead, and some six captives who, in due time, are brought in. Caractacus plays the magnanimous outlaw, and, in the best manner of Schiller's Karl Moor, gives them an edifying moral disquisition. The Chorus of Druids answers, oddly enough, with a short sermon against human sacrifice. The Romans, meanwhile, have returned and fired the sacred grove. Caractacus rushes out against them; and the Chorus stands singing in antiphony until the Roman general comes in and captures them all — Caractacus included. The play

[47] See F. E. Farley, *Scandinavian Influences in the English Romantic Movement*, 44, n.

ends with several pages of pretty speeches on the vanity of human wishes.

The plot of *Caractacus* progresses with some degree of logic and consistency; and the characters are by no means so hopeless as those in *Elfrida*. They are, to be sure, hardly living people; but the types are rather consistently carried out: Caractacus is the patriotic warrior; Vellinus, the deep-dyed and conspiring villain; Elidurus, the noble youth who was evidently made in order to fall in love with the ravishing Evelina; Aulus Dedius, the haughty Roman; and Arviragus, a second Elidurus, though not in love. The Chorus is rather inconsistent in its motives, and vacillates curiously between lauding Elidurus to the skies and threatening to torture him. The action is often clogged with too much talk; but Mason could have made a magnificent melodrama out of the story — had he been less intent on pseudo-Hellenism of structure.

The antique setting of the two dramas and the relevancy of their atmosphere and characters to the time they are supposed to mirror, deserve a moment's attention. Anachronism is no sin if the artist's power rises above it: thus we defend Shakespeare. But Mason can scarce plead such a case; and his plays are indubitably full of glaring pseudo-antiquity. Obviously, the sentimental characterization of Saxon and Celt belongs in the same museum of ethnology as Rousseau's Man in the State of Nature and Chateaubriand's noble Redskin. The plays themselves, the people in them, and what they think, feel, and do, are essentially anachronisms; and, in numerous rather obvious details also, the setting is muddled. Gray, indeed, does not seem to have known enough to correct it. Early in *Elfrida*, the fair heroine from Cornwall seems to be druidical[48] in her religion, whereas probably all of the Brythonic Celts were Christianized long before the Saxon invasion. Be this as it may, the "Chorus of British Virgins" later refers to Eden and to a "Seraph," [49] to God "Almighty," and to "the chos'n Archangel[50]"; and, in the end, Elfrida takes the veil. The masculine members of the *dramatis personæ* pretty well avoid committing themselves on the religious question, except that Orgar seems to give weight to the "saws of Druids" and of Bards.[51] Whether Mason sup-

[48] *Works*, II, 19.
[49] *Ibid.*, II, 24 and 56.
[50] *Ibid.*, II, 52.
[51] *Ibid.*, II, 40.

posed the Saxons to be Christian or pagan is matter for conjecture.[52] It is interesting, furthermore, to note that Athelwold has a "castle" [53] and so has Earl Egbert.[54] The use of the Norman-French term for a Saxon manor is not quite fortunate. As for old English or old Cornish manners and customs, I find no definite trace of them. In short, Mason, in *Elfrida*, was Romantic enough to be sentimental, but not enough to have much real local color. A fairly consistent accuracy to time and place was a later development of the Romantic current: modern history had to be written and taught in the schools before the reading public could attain an historic sense.

Caractacus is at least something of an improvement. Snyder[55] calls it "a wholly Celtic production," and makes sole exception of the borrowing of the sword Trifingus, in spite of Gray's objections, from Norse mythology.[56] Snyder attributes Mason's general correctness to Gray's scholarly oversight; and, indeed, Gray's criticisms were extended and minute.[57] He saved the young dramatist from taking Mona for the Isle of Man,[58] and from confusing Norse with Celtic mythology[59]; but he seems to have let pass the "harp of Phrygian fame." [60] Snyder hardly, however, gives Mason credit for doing considerable reading on his own part — although largely at the suggestion of Gray. Mason read Selden's annotations to Drayton's *Polyolbion*,[61] and must have found there numerous valuable references. The notes[62] appended to the play refer also to Pliny's *Natural History*, to Am. Marcellinus, to Tacitus, to Dion Chrysostom, to Strabo, to Lucan, and to various

[52] One may also note such dubious points as "pilgrim's staff and script" (*Works*, II, 7) and "arm'd knights at joust or tournament" (*Ibid.*, II, 18).

[53] *Ibid.*, II, 4, 43, etc.

[54] *Ibid.*, II, 71.

[55] *Mod. Phil.*, XI, 563 *et seq.* Snyder repeats this opinion more recently in his *Celtic Revival*, 53 *et seq.*

[56] See also Farley, *Scandinavian Influences in the English Romantic Movement*, 44, n. 1.

[57] Though no more so than many of his criticisms of Walpole's scholarly works, *Correspondence of Gray, etc.*, Toynbee ed., I, xxxix.

[58] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 302.

[59] This crime is not quite so ridiculous as most of Mason's critics would have us think. The mistake was common in the period. See Joseph Texte, *Rousseau*, 359. Even Mme. de Staël took Ossian for the father of *Germanic* poetry. See also Farley, *Scandinavian Influ.*, 252. Mason, very probably, got his false impression from Pelloutier's *Histoire des Celtes* which he was reading at the time. See Gray-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., 125, 134.

[60] *Works*, II, 110. Cf. Home's *Douglas* and its pseudo-antiquity.

[61] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VIII, 104, Nov. 9, 1781.

[62] *Works*, II, 198 *et seq.*

modern authors. On the other hand, the atmosphere of the piece has more the overstrained emotionalism of eighteenth-century sentimentality than the spirit of the Celt as we get it either in Irish or Welsh antiquity and folk-lore.[63] Most of Gray's criticism is of a purely literary nature; and much of that is very minute and even captious.[64] In short, *Elfrida* is a rather flimsy pseudo-antique; and *Caractacus*, although far more accurate to the letter, is still not very strictly Celtic in spirit.

In the matters already discussed — plot, character, and setting — these plays were only very moderately successful; but the author might plead that after all, they were written as closet-drama, and so should be judged chiefly as poems. The whole question of closet-drama is a difficult one; but, if we grant its right to exist — and one can hardly expunge Milton's *Samson* from literature — Mason's contribution must be considered. Unfortunately, however, his poetic vein ran neither smooth nor golden: like most of the minor poems, *Elfrida* is rather hopeless; and has not enough fine declamation to save it.

The tropes of *Elfrida* are instinct with Neo-classical lifelessness. Take, for instance, the opening lines, spoken by Orgar on his arrival before Athelwold's castle.

> How nobly does this venerable wood,
> Gilt with the glories of the orient sun,
> Embosom yon fair mansion! The soft air
> Salutes me with most cool and temp'rate breath,
> And, as I tread, the flow'r-besprinkled lawn
> Sends up a gale of fragrance. I could guess,
> If e'er Content deign'd visit mortal clime,
> This was her place of residence.

Pope[65] makes the wood "ancient" and "lofty"; for the "glories" of the sun, Pope has "Suns of Glory," skies "streaming glory," and "new glory" augmenting the day. "Soft air" has its Popean prototypes in "soft gales," "soft deluding air," and "soft zephyrs."

[63] It is to be remembered that Gray was, after all, a poor philologist, and that in his *Bard* he commits the very error of tangling Norse and Celtic mythology for which Mason has been so much damned. See Farley, *Scandinavian Influ.*, 25.

[64] See Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 338. For example, Gray objects to "float" used transitively, whereas it had been so used by reputable authors for over a century. See *N.E.D.*

[65] See Abbott's *Concordance*, New York, 1895, *s. v.*

Furthermore, Pope's "air" is at least three times associated with "breath." Pope refers to "cool gales," "cooling western breeze," and "cooling vapours" that "breathe along the mead." For "flower-besprinkled lawns," Pope has "flowery, silvan scenes," "green forests and the flowery plains," and "flowery lawn." For "gale of fragrance," Pope supplies a "spicy gale," "clouds of fragrance," and has a "sacred flower" that "with fragrance fills the skies." At least three times, he personifies Content.[66] And this list does not mention innumerable parallels, as good or better, to be drawn from Pope's followers.[67] The passage as a whole sounds like Duncan's speech of greeting in *Macbeth* pastoralized to the taste of the eighteenth century. Mason was simply tying the usual word-tags to the usual subjects, without considering the fitness of the speech to the anxious father who comes seeking his daughter. A number of lines in the poem can be traced to fairly probable sources of inspiration. His "lone owl, That nightly leaves her ivy-shrouded cell, And sails on slow wing through the closter'd isles"[68] is strongly reminiscent of Gray's *Elegy* and of the seventh stanza of Beattie's *Retirement,* one of the finest fragments to be found among the minor Romantic poets of the day; again, Mason's "Sequester'd in some shadowy vale"[69] suggests Gray's "Cool sequestered vale of life"; and again, "Reclin'd this mossy bank along" has a similar reminiscence.[70] Shakespeare, especially *Macbeth,* is amply represented: Athelwold says, "I cannot dress my features in light smiles and look the thing I am not"[71]; and Duncan's "This castle hath a pleasant seat" is twice reflected, once in the opening speech of Orgar, already quoted, and again when Edgar, on his arrival, declares:

> This castle is not more kind Nature's debtor
> For its delicious site, than 'tis to thee
> For this so goodly structure. From its base,
> Ev'n to yon turrets trim, and taper spires,[72]
> All is of choicest masonry.[73]

[66] Schomberg, 20, satirized Mason's prosopopœia in *Elfrida (ed. princ.,* 18, 20). Both passages were omitted in later editions of the play.

[67] Cf. the lists compiled by Myra Reynolds, *Nature in English Poetry,* ch. I.

[68] *Works,* II, 17.

[69] *Ibid.,* II, 20.

[70] *Ibid.,* II, 21.

[71] *Ibid.,* II, 34.

[72] The *spires* of a *castle* suggest Walpole's Gothic rather than the Mediæval actuality.

[73] *Works,* II, 43.

In a later ode, the phrase "life's little day," [74] again suggests *Macbeth*. Milton's "savory dinner set Of herbs and other country messes" is distinctly implicit in Mason's

> Or of his sparing mess partake,
> The sav'ry pulse, the wheaten cake,
> The bev'rage cool of limpid rill.[75]

And the *Ode* "Say will no white-rob'd Son of Light" [76] sounds like *Lycidas* and *Paradise Lost* passed through a blighting alembic.[77] Mason reminds one of the peculating authors in Irving's *Art of Book-Making*, who tried to dress their own nakedness in tatters of borrowed finery.

Caractacus, in its use of trope, shows some improvement over *Elfrida*. Influences of Gray, Milton, and Shakespeare are much less marked[78]; and the speeches, although more rhetorical than poetic, sometimes have a pat flourish about them that would be effective if they had more significance. Occasionally, Caractacus acquits himself of some fine declamation on British liberty. The best lines in the play are, in my opinion, the following ode; and I do not hesitate to pronounce it as good poetry as Mason ever wrote:

I. 1

> Hark! heard ye not yon footstep dread,
> That shook the earth with thund'ring tread?
> 'Twas Death. — In haste
> The warrior past;
> High tower'd his helmed head:
> I mark'd his mail, I mark'd his shield,
> I 'spy'd the sparkling of his spear,
> I saw his giant arm the falchion wield;
> Wide wav'd the bick'ring blade, and fir'd the angry air.

[74] *Works*, II, 50.
[75] *Ibid.*, II, 22.
[76] *Ibid.*, II, 48.
[77] There are several fragments that sound like Gray's *Bard*, and it is significant to note that *Elfrida* was published long before we hear a word of *The Bard* in Gray's letters: See *Works*, II, 20, the Bards drawing down Fancy from the realms of light; II, 30, "Crowned high the sparkling bowl"; II, 63, Gray and Mason celebrate the Celt as "our British line" and as "Britannia's issue."
[78] The passage "Low on the instant all the mountain whitens With slow-descending bards" suggests Gray's poem: in the cast of *Elfrida*, these suggestions show influence of Mason on Gray; but, in *Caractacus*, written after *The Bard*, the influence must have been in the opposite direction. For further notes of influence, see Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 314 *et seq.*

I. 2

On me (he cry'd) my Britons, wait,
To lead you to the field of fate
I come: Yon car
That cleaves the air,
Descends to throne my state:
I mount, your champion and your god.
My proud steeds neigh beneath the thong:
Hark! to my wheels, that rattle loud!
Hark! to my clarion[79] shrill, that brays the wood among!

I. 3

Fear not now the fever's fire,
Fear not now the death-bed groan,
Pangs that torture, pains that tire,
Bed-rid age with feeble moan:
These domestic terrors wait
Hourly at my palace gate;
And when o'er slothful realms my rod I wave,
These on the tyrant king and coward slave
Rush with vindictive rage, and drag them to their grave.

II. 1

But ye, my sons, at this high hour
Shall share the fulness of my power:
From all your bows,
In levell'd rows,
My own dread shafts shall shower.
Go then to conquest, gladly go,
Deal forth my dole of destiny,
With all my fury dash the trembling foe
Down to those darksome dens where Rome's pale spectres lie.

II. 2

Where creeps the ninefold stream profound
Her black inexorable round,
On the bank,
To willows dank,
The shiv'ring ghosts are bound.
Twelve thousand crescents all shall swell
To full-orb'd pride, and fading die,
Ere they again in life's gay mansions dwell:
Not such the meed that crowns the sons of Liberty.

[79] Here one of the Druids blows the sacred trumpet (Mason's note).

II. 3

No, my Britons! battle-slain
  Rapture gilds your parting hour:
I, that all despotic reign,
  Claim but there a moment's power.
Swiftly the soul of British flame
Animates some kindred frame,
  Swiftly to life and light triumphant flies,
  Exult again in martial ecstacies,
Again for freedom fights, again for freedom dies.[80]

In this ode, as in his others, Mason is fond of his liquid rhymes, of rather inept alliteration and the rather obvious effects that the eighteenth century styled "ornament." His blank verse, moreover, shows the same qualities. Clearly, it is not dramatic at all but pseudo-lyrico-didactic: pseudo-lyrical in the descriptions and in emotional passages, amply didactic in soliloquies upon all manner of topics. It has not the speed, the flexibility, or the fire that characterize true dramatic verse. Metrically, it seems fairly well done; but there is a harsh suggestion of mechanics about the thing; for the verse is too regular, especially in the more emotional passages, to bespeak the ardor denoted by the words. The fault is doubtless due to the fact that Mason, as in *Musæus*, was copying the organ-tones of *Paradise Lost*; and this is too immobile a form for the swift turns of dramatic emotion. But the fault was common to the age; and *Cato* sins as badly as *Caractacus*. Mason's blank verse, as an imitation of Milton, is not altogether bad; but, as such, it is an inappropriate medium for his purpose. Moreover, there is often, very often, too much of it. Even the best passages of *Caractacus* are over long; and the lines of *Elfrida* wring the last saccharine tear from every situation.

In his appended letters,[81] Mason says he wrote *Elfrida* to exemplify "the antient method, so far as it is probable a Greek poet, were he alive, would now do, in order to adapt himself to the genius of our times, and the character of our Tragedy. According to this notion, [he continues] everything was to be allowed to the present taste, which nature and Aristotle could possibly dispense with; and nothing of intrigue or refinement was to be admitted

[80] *Works*, II, 153-155.

[81] *Works*, II, 177 *et seq.* These are by Mason, either to Gray or a man of straw. See *Gent. Mag.*, XXII, 224 etc.

at which antient judgment could reasonably take offence. Good sense, as well as antiquity,[82] prescribed an adherence to the three Unities; these therefore were strictly observed. But on the other hand, to follow the modern masters in those respects wherein they had not so faultily deviated from their predecessors, a story was chosen, in which the tender rather than the noble passions were predominant, and in which even love had the principal share. Characters too were drawn as nearly approaching to private ones, as tragic dignity would permit; and affections raised rather from impulse of common humanity, than the distresses of royalty and the fate of kingdoms. Besides this, for the sake of natural embellishment, and to reconcile more modern readers to that simplicity of fable, in which I thought it necessary to copy the antients, I contrived to lay the scene in an old romantic forest. For, by this means, I was enabled to enliven the Poem by various touches of pastoral description; not affectedly brought in from the storehouse of picturesque imagination, but necessarily resulting from the scenery of the place itself. . . ."

To judge an author's work in terms of his purpose is certainly to use a fair criterion of criticism. To transport Euripides to eighteenth-century England and set him a-writing an *Elfrida* may not be an easy, but is certainly a worthy, undertaking. Of course, our theoretic Euripides would remain in some respects Euripides, and, in some respects, become essentially English. But in what respects? Mason makes him cling to his Greek forms, the outgrowth of a religion long since dead (dying even in the Athens of his own day!) and of a theatre fit only for the skies of a semitropical country. If Shakespeare points a true example, genius accepts the forms of its age, theatrical, poetical, rhetorical, bends them to its purpose, and enshrines in them an essential and enduring substance. Mason, on the other hand, has made his eighteenth-century Grecian cling tenaciously to the dried husk of a form and compromise absolutely the essential matters of substance. His form must have three unities, a chorus, no killings on the stage, and all the rest of it; but the penetrating insight into

[82] Seemingly, Mason, like most literati of the eighteenth century, knew his Aristotle through Castelvetro and other Italian critics of the Renaissance, rather than at first hand; for they, not Aristotle, are the source for the "three unities."

reality, and the classic balance of nice judgment, he sacrifices to sickish Sentimentalism and an incoherent agglomeration of picturesque scenery, melodramatic episode, and artificial rhetoric.

Caractacus, written with a similar purpose, to "mingle Attic art with Shakespeare's fire," [83] fulfils this end but little better. The theme, patriotic rather than sentimental, has much more of the Hellenic stuff in it; but to say that, either as drama or as poetry, the play approaches "Shakespeare's fire," as its author so fondly hoped, is of course ridiculous. For him "art" is a sadly formal concern, a matter of rule and line. In Shakespeare, likewise, it was only a "fire" of rhetoric that he saw — if we may judge his appreciation by his copy. In dramas, as in life, Mason played, all too much, the *dilettante*, an interesting but unavailing Classico-Romantico-Tragico-sentimental dabbler in dramatic technique.

All this is clear enough to the critic of the twentieth century; but, in Mason's day, the public read the plays with avidity,[84] wept over *Elfrida*, hugely admired *Caractacus*, even sat through their production on the stage, and called for revivals. The former ran through eight or more editions in twenty years; and contemporary references are numerous. Warburton took a kindly interest in the piece.[85] When *Elfrida* was scarcely out, "R. D.," [86] in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, termed Mason "the soul of genius and of song"; and, during the same year, appeared *Remarks on W. Mason's Elfrida in Letters to a Friend*. The *Gentleman's Magazine* disliked the chorus and the Greek form, but considered the play a distinctive work "abounding with poetical images." [87] The *Monthly* gave it seven pages and predicted that Mason would be "the first tragic writer of the present age." [88] Young Cumberland, fresh from the Greek tragedians at college, "planned and composed" a *Caractacus*, "in imitation of it." [89] Nevile was "uncommonly pleased with the performance," and found it in strict accord with the Rules.[90] Fielding approved *Elfrida* and declared Mason a "learned Cantab." [91] Elizabeth Montagu regretted that

[83] *Elegy to Hurd*, *Works*, I, 104. This represents the revised version of the line. The earlier form read "pomp" for "art."

[84] N. B. the number of editions noted in Bibl. A.

[85] Warburton, *Letters*, 100.

[86] Robert Dodsley? Dobson makes the suggestion, *Nat. Rev.*, LIX, 287, n.

[87] *Gent. Mag.*, XXII, 136, 224.

[88] *Mon. Rev.*, VI, 387.

[89] Cumberland, *Memoirs*, 58. This play is lost.

[90] Nevile, *Remarks on Elfrida*, 3.

[91] Fielding, *Cov. Gard. Jour.*, Jensen ed., II, 93-94.

his "Melpomene" was "too chaste, too cold for the theatre."[92] In 1753, *The Union* reprinted choruses from the play; and Francklin, in his poem on *Translation*, made a complimentary reference to "soft Elfrida."[93] The *Gentleman's Magazine* of 1756 noticed a sentimental *Athelstan* in five acts, which may owe its subject to *Elfrida*.[94] In 1757, Cooper compared Mason very favorably to Seneca and to Sophocles,[95] and declared that the "palm of *tragic* glory" hung wavering between the three. Even after the publication of *Caractacus*, a reviewer in the *Critical* still declared *Elfrida* "the *ne plus ultra* of Mr. Mason's abilities."[96] Newberry praised the "*Ode on Constancy*."[97] Helvetius in Chapter III of his *Essai de l'Esprit*, seems to have borrowed from *Elfrida*[98]; Temple recommended the play to Boswell[99]; Wesley praised it highly[100]; Beattie declared *Elfrida* and *Caractacus* "two poems that do honor to the English tongue"[101]; and, of course, Anna Seward went into ecstasies over the plays.[102] As late as 1790, the *Monthly* testified that they still retained "a considerable share of public approbation."[103] D. G.'s *Remarks*, prefacing Bayley's *Orestes in Argos*,[104] show the reaction against Mason's pseudo-Romanticism that arose very early in the nineteenth century. Of Mason, D. G. says: ". . . he gave us the model but the soul was wanting. When he would be grand he was just pompous — when simple, he was only puerile." Drake declared the choruses "masterpieces,"[105] and the plays influenced Sayers and probably Southey.[106] They were still remembered with admiration down to 1834, when *Blackwood's* compared the odes favorably with those of Coleridge![107]

As a stage-play, *Elfrida* was several times given in the 1770's and '80's.[108] Mrs. Delany says that Colman's production in 1772

[92] Elizabeth Montagu, *Correspondence*, Climenson ed., II, 161.
[93] Francklin, *Translation*, line 183.
[94] *Gent. Mag.*, XXVI, 155.
[95] Cooper, J. G., *Letters concerning Taste*, 97.
[96] *Crit. Rev.*, XIV, 447.
[97] Newberry, *Art of Poetry*, 91-93.
[98] Mason, *Gray*, 1778, 83, n., and Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 7-8, n.
[99] Boswell *Letters*, Seccombe's ed., 2.
[100] Wesley, *Journal*, VI, 134.
[101] Beattie, *Essays*, ed. Phila., 1809, II, 167.
[102] Seward, Anna, *Letters*, IV, 363.
[103] *Mon. Rev.*, III, n.s., 140.
[104] Cumberland, *Brit. Theatre*, 1826, XII, 5.
[105] Drake, *Literary Hours*, II, 26.
[106] Haller, *Southey*, 82 *et seq.*
[107] *Blackwood*, XXXVI, 553.
[108] See Chapters V and VI.

was "sadly performed"[109]; and, when Mason revised it himself and Mrs. Siddons played Albina, the *Morning Chronicle* said that "nothing could be made of so dull a drama."[110] Mason himself recognized the failure, and admitted himself "in a state of theatrical damnation."[111] Dibdin, perhaps because he was a personal friend of Mason's, spoke highly of the plays, but avoided the question of their success on the stage.[112] The *Quarterly*[113] summed up their repute among those admirers that remained to Mason in 1816: "The public taste has at length assigned them [*Elfrida* and *Caractacus*] to the rank of beautiful dramatic poems with much fancy, some tinsel, great classical taste, and an entire unfitness for representation."

The critical history of *Caractacus* is closely linked to that of *Elfrida*; but the former, perhaps because it was a better play and less sentimental, was never so popular: eight editions of *Elfrida* came out in the first twenty years and only five of *Caractacus*. The reviews, moreover, were less favorable. The *Gentleman's Magazine* summarized the plot at some length[114]; the *Monthly* gave it a long, but rather cold review[115]; the *Critical* considered it "a work of great merit,"[116] and *The London Magazine* quoted in full the dedicatory elegy to Hurd.[117] Count Algarotti thought highly of it.[118] Gray read it twice "not with pleasure only but with emotion,"[119] and declared it "the work of a Man: whereas the *Elfrida* is only that of a boy, a promising boy, indeed, and of no common genius."[120] Foote, the greatest comic actor of the day, in his *Penseroso* quoted from *Caractacus*, and acknowledged the influence of "the elegant Mr. Mason."[121] It seems to have influenced Mason's curate Delap, author of *Hecuba* (1761) and several other tragedies, and perhaps also Rogers in his *Ode to*

[109] Delany *Correspondence*, Sec. Ser., I, 488.
[110] Fyvie, *Tragedy Queens*, 238-239.
[111] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 119.
[112] Dibdin, *Eng. Stage*, V, 289-290.
[113] *Quart. Rev.*, XV, 383.
[114] *Gent. Mag.*, XXIX, 321-322.
[115] *Mon. Rev.*, XX, 507-512.
[116] *Crit. Rev.*, VIII, 11-16.
[117] *Lond. Mag.*, XXVIII, 333.
[118] *Correspondence of Gray, etc.*, Toynbee ed., II, 268, and Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 8.
[119] Gray-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., 101.
[120] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 8.
[121] See E. P. Snyder, *Mod. Phil.*, XI, 559 *et seq.* Snyder notes a number of minor influences of *Caractacus* on late eighteenth-century literature; and in his *Celtic Revival* he notes the influence of the play on various contributors to Celticism during the century, 66, 107, 138, 152, 165, 180.

Superstition.[122] Walpole's opinion was variable.[123] Sir William Forbes called *Elfrida* and *Caractacus* "esteemed pieces"[124]; and Dr. Glasse of Oxford did the *Caractacus* into Greek.[125] At the time of its production in 1776, *The Critical Review*[126] referred to its "success on the stage"; but it was not so often revived as *Elfrida.*

These two plays are probably Mason's most notable works. *The English Garden* was widely commended, to be sure; and the *Heroic Epistle* struck a fine touch of occasional satire; but *Elfrida* and *Caractacus* were classics for over fifty years. Their success, however, was not based on any lasting virtue; and they have descended unwept to the inferno of scholarly dissection. Mason took English stories in English settings and, with weak sentiment and a rather narrow patriotism, tried to build real tragedy on an unmotivated plot and inconsistent characters. He arrayed the whole in rhetoric in place of poetry; and the result is neither fish nor fowl. It is a crowning irony that the poorer play of the two, by virtue of its very faults, should have been the more popular; and it emphasizes the fact that Mason's works are important not in an absolute but in an historical sense: they reflect the taste and the literary conditions of the age.

Argentile and Curan, a romance on the Elizabethan model, is a later, and, in many respects, a better production than either *Elfrida* or *Caractacus.* Mason seems to have taken the plot from Percy who, in turn, took it from Warner's *Albion's England.*[127] Mason admits altering the story "more than was customary with our old Dramatists"; but, even so, the plot may best be given, in large measure, by quotation from the Percy version, which appears to be his immediate source:

[122] *Mon. Rev.,* LXXV, 49.

[123] Perhaps it is Walpole's "insincerity" that caused his praise of Mason's tragedies to Harcourt and his damnation of them with faint praise to Montagu. *Letters,* Cunn. ed., III, 136, 229.

[124] Forbes, *Life of Beattie,* 147, written c. 1805.

[125] Tytler calls this translation "one of the most extraordinary efforts in Greek literature that has appeared since the revival of letters," *Essay on Translation,* London, 1791, 156-157.

[126] *Crit. Rev.,* XLII, 475-476.

[127] See Mason, *Works,* II, 208; Percy, *Reliques,* Vol. II, Bk. II, No. 24. Percy thinks Warner invented the story. It was expanded in 1617 by William Webster into a more extended poem, and Percy says it supplied an episode for the *Ballad of the Two Young Princes on Salisbury Plain.*

King Edel and king Adelbright
In Diria jointly reigne;
In loyal concorde during life
These kingly friends remaine.

When Adelbright should leave his life
To Edel thus he sayes;
By those same bondes of happie love,
That held us friends alwaies;

By our by-parted crowne, of which
The moyetie is mine;
By God, to whom my soule must passe,
And so in time may thine;

I pray thee, may I conjure thee,
To nourish, as thine own,
Thy neece, my daughter Argentile,
Till she to age be growne;
And then, as thou receivest it,
Resigne to her my throne.

A promise had for his bequest,
The testator he dies:
But all that Edel undertooke,
He afterwards denies.

Yet well he 'fosters at' a time
The damsell that was growne
The fairest lady under heaven;
Whose beautie being knowne,

A many princes seeke her love;
But none might her obtaine;
For grippell Edel to himselfe
Her kingdome sought to gaine;
And for that cause from sight of such
He did his ward restraine.

By chance[128] one Curan, sonne unto
A prince in Danske, did see
The maid with whom he fell in love,
As much as man might bee.

[128] In Mason's play, the prince came in person a-wooing, saw her in spite of Edel, and fell in love.

Unhappy youth, what should he doe?
His saint was kept in mewe;
Nor he, nor any noble-man
Admitted to her vewe. . . .

After the conventional "melancholy fits," the prince won his way to her presence as a "kitchen drudge"; but she refused his suit. Edel then thought of marrying her to a man of low degree, and lighted upon this very "kitchen drudge"; but she, knowing only that Edel wished to marry her beneath her station, very properly fled away, and became "a neat herds maid." Curan, in distraction, became a shepherd, forgot his old love, wooed and won a new one in his new vocation, and found this new one to be his Argentile.

Mason follows this narrative rather closely up to the point of Argentile's flight. According to his play, she escapes Edel's court under the protection of Oswald, a rebellious Saxon Earl. The love-affair of Oswald's son with Editha, the princess' attendant, forms a rather slight sub-plot. The pairs of lovers wander at cross purposes for two acts in a sort of Forest of Arden, until at last they all find their way to the coast where the Danish fleet rides at anchor, and there are happily united. Story, setting, and treatment are all Elizabethan, except for a certain decorous toning down of what the eighteenth century was pleased to condemn as extravagance of imagination.

As a piece of dramaturgy, the play is rather well articulated. The exposition is clear; the complication is lucid and fairly logical; and the outcome does not violate ethical propriety. The first act, with the dying King Adelbright going into the monastery, with the chanting monks and the train of nobles, reminds one at once of the opening of *Parsifal*. Music and pageantry, in the earlier part, are counted on to help sustain the play; and, in places, throughout the later acts, the action alone seems inadequate to hold interest. The end of the very first act is spoiled by a wide desert of didacticism; and the love-scenes in the forest are instinct with stuff of Dresden china. Pastoral drama needs a supreme master of the whimsical, of the fantastic, and of the essentially human, to galvanize it into life; and Mason was none of these.

The characters are, to be sure, little more than types; but they act consistently, and are fairly well drawn. King Edel is the

time-honored wicked uncle, and is built definitely on the lines of Hamlet's step-father.[129] There are occasional Shakespearean phrases, moreover, such as "beguile the lingering time"[130]; and the forest scenes are strongly in the manner of *As You Like It.* The characters are all that one would expect them to be: the kings grandiose, the nobles proud, the maidens fair; but there is something more: Adelbright shows a real affection for his daughter; Argentile has much more will and sense of dignity than the ordinary heroine of a "she-tragedy"; and Curan has a bit of the charm of youthful adventure about him. The realistic sketches of the Falconer and his compeers, however, have, at their best, a suggestion of *Tom Jones* about them; and, for once, the reader feels that Mason is picturing, faintly to be sure and under a strong Elizabethan influence, but yet truthfully, the astonishing country bumpkins who were his servants, his parishioners, and his neighbors at Aston.

Significance, either in the general philosophical sense, or in the more definite sense of a *Tendenz,* is largely lacking in the play, except for a few satiric shafts at rapacious prelates in the first act. Sentimentalism, although it has not captured the play as a whole, is writ large over the love-scenes; and all too easily do "tears gush" from Edwin's eye.[131] Occasionally, there is a eulogy on human nature or freedom of thought[132]; but these are too brief to interrupt the drama seriously. The play is one of some excellence and great promise; but Mason, unfortunately, did not continue to develop in this direction: the age demanded satires, sermons, didactic poetizings; and Mason was not wise enough or strong enough to breast the flood.

Argentile is written partly in verse, partly in prose. The opening "Chorus" consists of rhyming quatrains of trochaic tetrameter, usually catalectic. The meter serves well for a solemn chant: the words are sonorous enough; but there is rather too much of the alliterative refrain, "Holy Hilda, hear and aid!" The blank verse has slightly freer *enjambement* than in the former plays;

[129] See especially speeches, *Works,* II, 210, 223, etc. I do not wish to imply that this conception of Claudius is the correct one, but it seems to have been Mason's—and, indeed, the one current in the age.

[130] *Works,* II, 234.

[131] *Works,* II, 270.

[132] *Works,* II, 229, 232-233.

but, otherwise, reads regularly. There is very little dactylic substitution; there never fail five stresses to a line, usually in iambic alternation; and feminine endings are none too common. Mason escapes dire monotony only by run-on lines, irregular cæsuras, and occasional pauses within the line, strongly marked by semicolon, colon, or period. The effect has a certain sustained dignity, but is rather stiff for dramatic purposes. The prose is colloquial and at times almost racy of the soil; but Mason could never quite forget that he was an eighteenth-century clergyman with perhaps some hopes of a bishopric.

The play misses greatness both as poetry and as drama; and it was published too late to be caught up by the tide that gave success to *Elfrida* and *Caractacus*. The reviewers praised it; and, indeed, it deserves praise; but their words availed nothing. It first appeared in the third volume of Mason's *Poems* of 1797, published only a few weeks before his death. The *Monthly* spoke well of it[133]; the *Critical* wondered why it was not brought upon the stage[134]; and Drake declared it "an admirable drama." [135] It was reprinted in the *Works* of 1811, but was never produced or even printed alone. It was not romantic enough for an age that, at its worst, revelled in "Gothic" horrors and lacrymose sentimentalism, and, at its best, in the fine realism of Burns and the high imagination of Coleridge; nor, on the other hand, was it a great enough performance to stand out above its period.

Of *Sappho* and *Pigmalion*, little need be said. They are late and not very important works.[136] The former is styled "a lyrical drama in three acts," and may well have been imitated from Metastasio's operas.[137] It really amounts to nothing more than a libretto; and libretti of the day are not very good reading. The dramatic side of opera had declined far from its original intent of reviving Greek tragedy[138]; and the regular eighteenth-century

[133] *Mon. Rev.*, 1797, 440.

[134] *Crit. Rev.*, XXI, n. s., 1797, 397-400.

[135] Drake, *Literary Hours*, I, 334.

[136] *Sappho*, apparently, was written in 1777-8. See Walpole *Letters*, Toynbee ed., X, 177 *et seq.*

[137] *Works*, II, 320, say that the spacing of the print is borrowed from the Paris edition (1755) of "Metastatio's [Metastasio's] operas." *Sappho*, if not based on Metastasio, undoubtedly follows the regular *opera seria* form of the Italian composers.

[138] This was the original purpose of the Florentine clique who started opera about 1600 and stood behind Monteverdi's *Orfeo*. Romain Rolland's *Histoire de l'Opera avent Lully et Scarlatti*, Paris, 1895, is the best treatment of the early period of opera.

opera seria, as exemplified in the Italians, in Handel, and even in Mozart, sacrificed the most ordinary common sense in plot to the whims of the *prima donna* and the *primo uomo*,[139] and to their desire for vocal display. The plot must be based upon two pairs of lovers; each of the principals must in every act have an aria with the inevitable two themes and *Da Capo;* and, in the course of the performance, the *prima donna* must have at least one aria of each of the five standard types.[140] Of course, the result was very artificial. Gluck had long since revolted against it in *Orfeo ed Euridice*, produced in October, 1762[141]; and Rousseau, in *Le Devin du Village*[142]; but *opera seria* still flourished, even in France, down to the Gluck-Piccinni War. Mason chose the dominant form: and the choice is quite characteristic; for he loved a complex and highly developed technique, and had little sense of reality or of holding the mirror up to nature. *Sappho* closely follows the *opera seria*. There are the necessary two sets of lovers: Sappho and Phaon, and Lycidas and Doris; Sappho and Phaon each have at least one long aria in each act; but whether they each have opportunity to show off all five varieties, and how the two themes and the *Da Capo* were managed, cannot be judged from the text alone.

The play begins with a sort of prologue by Venus and Cupid which explains how the Graces endowed Phaon with such beauty that Sappho fell in love with him.[143] The first act opens with a "free translation" [144] of Sappho's *Hymn to Venus* done over, not

[139] Regularly a male soprano. *The Impresario*, a juvenile work of Mozart's, is a charming satire upon the problems of opera-writing in the latter eighteenth century.

[140] These were: *aria cantabile, aria di portamento, aria di mezzo carattere, aria parlante, aria di bravura.* See Grove.

[141] Gustave Desnoiresterres's *Gluck et Piccinni*, Paris, 1875, in leading to the famous "war," treats the whole matter of the rise of music-drama. See p. 47 *et seq.* "Les passions, les grands mouvements de l'âme, une réalité palpable et que la musique n'est pas impuissante à rendre, voilà, ce qu'on eût vainement cherché dans les opéras de Métastase," etc.

[142] See Rousseau's *Lettre sur la Musique Françoise* in defense of Italian *bouffe*. Rousseau objected to the artificiality of French music, and desired a closer relation between music and language. See *Œuvres*, ed. Paris, 1891, VI, 168 *et seq.* For a vivid description of an eighteenth-century opera see Lady Mary Montagu's letter to Pope, Vienna, Sept. 14, 1716, or Gray to Walpole, Toynbee ed., I, 85-86-87. Cf. Arne in Appendix D.

[143] *Works*, II, 324. Mason explains that this is not an essential part of the play, and that it was written "many years before" to form the first scene of a masque.

[144] The words are apparently Mason's. See *Works*, II, 326.

very felicitously, into an aria. Then follows a scene in which Doris begs her father to give her to Lycidas in marriage; Doris has a solo; there is a short scene between Lycidas and Sappho, then Sappho again alone; then Phaon and Doris, and Phaon alone. The first act has hardly a shade of drama, and quite justifies the application of that opprobrious term, "concert opera." Doris suddenly falls in love with Phaon, and suddenly rejects Lycidas. So the marionettes go to right or left as the wires are pulled until finally Sappho abjures Phaon and flings herself from the cliff at the *finale* of a suitable aria. The lines are partly in blank verse, partly in a free, rhymed measure. There are considerable change of scene and some chance for scenic effect. Footnotes carefully point out the translations from Sappho. As a piece of literary art, the piece would perhaps be acceptable if there were lyrical fervor in it; but there is not.

Why any one should wish to publish such a thing, and why the public should read it, seems to us a problem; but, as a matter of fact, Metastasio's *libretti* were evidently read as literature in Italy, France, and England,[145] if we can trust editions and translations of his works — a cruel commentary on the taste of the age! But this was not all: Anna Williams imitated his *Uninhabited Island*[146] in English verse; and Hamilton did over his *Themistocles* into *The Patriot.* A. G. Meissner published *Die Wüste Insel* in German verse[147]; the Chilean Egaña made his *Zenobia* into the Spanish *Al Amor Vence el Deber,*[148] and one of the few poems Rousseau wrote was a "free imitation" from Metastasio. Mason then, was not doing an especially unusual thing in his *Sappho*; but it has very small literary value; and, if it have musical worth, the fact has never been demonstrated by a performance. In fact, one cannot even be certain that his lines were ever set.[149] The play had little influence in England; but it ran through several editions in Italian translation.

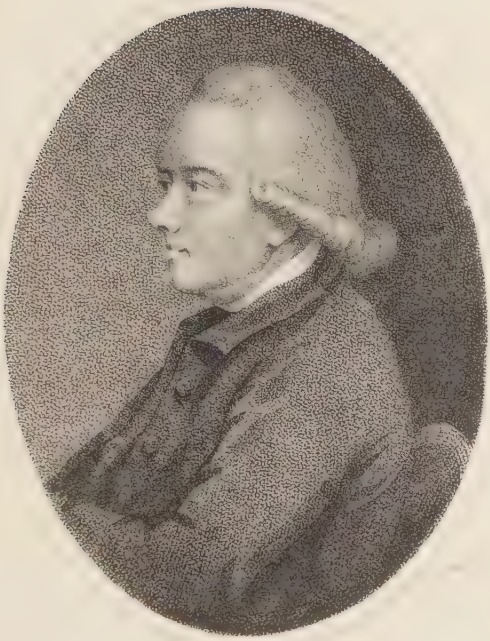
[145] Walpole seems even to have liked them. See Toynbee ed. of his letters, X, 178. Walpole gave Mason criticism and advised him to add choruses.

[146] *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse* by Anna Williams, London, 1766.

[147] Leipzig, 1778.

[148] *Ocios Filosoficos y Poeticos* by Juan Egaña, London, 1829, IV, 105.

[149] Mason intended to have Giardini set it (Walpole *Letters*, Toynbee ed., X, 178); and Walpole sent it to him (X, 187), Feb. 12, 1778. Apparently nothing came of the matter. For Mason's replies to Walpole see Mitford ed. under corresponding dates, or see Cunningham.



Mackenzie sculp

W. Mason M. A.

[illegible]

Of the *Pigmalion* scene, "translated into theatrical verse from the French prose of J. J. Rousseau of Geneva," even less need be said.[150] Rousseau wrote it for music; and this gives it a cast similar to *Sappho*.[151] The original is no great addition to its author's fame[152]; and Mason's translation is not happy. He "poeticizes" the French of Rousseau, which, though somewhat rhetorical, was at least straightforward; but his figurative language is no more inspired in this than in his other poetry. Take, for instance, the following passage in which Pigmalion invokes the statue to live. It is supposed to be uttered in a "tone of transport":

> It cannot be, O torment, rage, despair,
> O hopeless, horrible, distracting passion!
> The pains of hell rack my desponding soul.
> Beings of power! Beings of mercy hear me!
> Hear me, ye gods! before whose awful shrines
> The people kneel because ye know their frailty;
> Yes, ye have oft for vainer purposes
> Lavish'd your miracles; look then with pity
> On this fair form, look on this tortured breast,
> Be just to both and merit our oblations.[153]

From then on, the soliloquy continues "with a more pathetic degree of enthusiasm," and discusses the "Parent of Worlds! Soul of the Universe!" somewhat in the fashion in which Shelley (at his worst) might have written, had he tried to imitate Pope. As drama, the piece simply *is* not; but the *Monthly* complacently praised the verse for its "harmony and spirit." [154]

Mason the dramatist, like Mason the poet, is primarily a technical *doctrinaire*. In poetry, he experimented with larger matters of form, such as the Pindaric ode and with more minute points such as complex alliterations and liquid rhymes. Dramatically, he likewise pursued a sort of laboratory method: in *Elfrida* and *Caractacus* he wrote Greek dramas with choruses; he tried his hand at the Elizabethan in *Argentile and Curan*; then he took a turn as librettist and translator. The substance and the form of his plays indicate interests similar to those in the poems. *Elfrida*

[150] See *Œuvres Complètes* de J. J. Rousseau, Paris, 1901, V, 232-236.

[151] The date of writing is uncertain but was probably late in Mason's life.

[152] The *Critical*, XII, 152, reviewed the French version favorably.

[153] *Works*, II, 373.

[154] *Mon. Rev.*, LXI, 75.

is sentimental, like so many of the odes and elegies; and *Caractacus* is an iteration of the patriotism which has already been noted in the *Ode to Pitt* and the *Ode on the Fate of Tyranny*. *Argentile and Curan* combines both themes; and the two operas have a strong flavor of Sentimentalism. It is worthy of note that in all of these efforts, he called heavily upon music and scenic effect to help out the flagging drama: indeed, that is characteristic of the Romantic author; for his lyrical Muse needs every accessory before it can venture on the stage. Unfortunately, Mason had not much even of lyrical inspiration. Dramatically, he occupies a position very like Shelley, or Byron: only they were great poets, and he was not. Even so, one must give him a certain credit for paving the way for their advent and helping to prepare English poetry and the English public for what they did.

For the scholar of to-day, perhaps the chief interest in the dramas of Mason lies in the illustration they give of the taste of the ordinary intellect of the eighteenth century. One begins to understand what Mason and his age saw to admire in Shakespeare and Milton; and *Elfrida* is no mean document to point eighteenth-century appreciation of Hellenic culture. Just as the age admired the tense emotion of the Elizabethans and reproduced it in rant, so it reverenced the formal simplicity of the Greeks, and reproduced it in stiff conventionality: in both cases it overlooked or at least could not imitate the essential greatness. Artistically, the times were out of joint. The age was fascinated with the idea of a rococo combination of what it regarded as the virtues of types and schools that were really in essential opposition. It was an unhappy effort at a new æsthetic synthesis; and Mason, with his Celtic-Greek drama and his Greek-Italian opera, is interesting as one of those who tried by reaction and experiment to evolve something better and new.

CHAPTER X

THE ENGLISH GARDEN

MASON began *The English Garden* in 1767, shortly after the death of his wife; and he implies that he undertook it to solace his grief.[1] The opening tribute to his "meek Maria," "angel mild," confirms this impression; and the grave tone of the whole certainly suggests Young's *Night Thoughts*, supposed to be written on a similar occasion. The first book came out in 1772[2]; and, by 1781, all four had appeared. Like the minor poems and the dramas, it is a work entirely characteristic of Mason's age. Its fundamentally didactic form reflects the Neo-classicism of the 1770's; but its detail is in a fashion largely Romantic. It constitutes one in a long list of poems, didactic in purpose, sentimental in trend, and generally rural in setting. John Philips' *Cyder* appeared in 1708; James Thomson's *Seasons*, 1726-1730[3]; William Somerville's *The Chace*, in 1735; Matthew Greene's *The Spleen*, in 1737; Henry Brooke's *Universal Beauty* (Pt. II) was written about 1735; and William Shenstone's *Rural Elegance*, in 1750; Christopher Smart's *Hop Garden* and Robert Dodsley's *Agriculture* were published about the middle of the century; John Dyer's *Fleece*, in 1757; James Grainger's *Sugar Cane*, in 1764; and Erasmus Darwin's *Botanical Garden*, the *reductio ad absurdum* of the group, in 1789.[4] Most of these are based more or less remotely upon Virgil, but with this difference: whereas he gives living pictures, specific and concrete, of vineyard-planting, stock-raising, and bee culture, his imitators

[1] *Works*, I, 212-213, 379.

[2] Perhaps 1771; see Bibl. A.

[3] I give these dates in New Style. *Winter* appeared in March, 1725-6. *Camb. Hist.*, X, 105. It must be remembered that Thomson revised the poem very fully between 1738 and 1744; and that many of the most Romantic elements in it date from the period of this revision.

[4] Perhaps Cowper's *Task* (the last four books at all events) should also be added to the list. See also Beers, *Eng. Romanticism in the 18th Century*, 124. There were many similar poems in French by Lambert, Rosset, Lebrun, Delille, *et al.* Mason's *English Garden* is not essentially different from the rest of the series. There were also many prose works on gardening. See Loudon's *Bibliography*.

usually lose this racy tang of the soil, sometimes in cant abstractions and conventional descriptions, sometimes in the complex machinery that had taken the place of Virgil's pruning hook and "ceaseless mattock."

This is Mason's "*opus magnum sive didacticum*"[5]; and, although he had proposed to write it on the strict lines of Horace, the rural subject matter and the desire to introduce appropriate philosophical reflections drew him more and more toward the Virgilian model,[6] with its looser structure and idyllic vignettes.[7] Mason's object was not "a mere descriptive eulogy," like Thomson's *Seasons*; he rather aimed "to polish husbandry"; to give instruction in the art of preserving the "beauties" of Nature[8]; and, most important for our purpose, to express a logical justification for his taste in gardening and, incidentally, for his ideas on life in general. The poem, therefore, pictures, among other things, the intellectual basis of early English Romanticism.

In a didactic poem, plan is of prime importance for expository clearness. We cannot "polish husbandry," if husbandry does not understand what we are saying; and, indeed, therein lay the deep-rooted absurdity of so many eighteenth-century poems, begotten of the highest motives, but planned in such disjointed, haphazard fashion that neither the husbandman nor any one else could use them as a practical guide. Mason's *opus* consists of over twenty-four hundred blank verse lines, divided about equally into four

[5] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 154. This passage undoubtedly refers to *The English Garden*. See *Works*, I, 212-213.

[6] Didactic poems of the period were regularly written on one of these models or the other. See Batteux, *Princ. de la Lit.*, Paris, 1774, III, 301 *et seq.*

[7] Mason says that Pope's *Epistle to Lord Burlington* prevented his treating gardens in the Virgilian style; but, in a note probably written much later, he says that his poem "has the *Georgics* of *Virgil* for its original." *Works*, I, 205. Mustard finds that Mason even borrowed verbally from the *Fourth Georgic*. *Am. Jour. Phil.*, XXIX, 1. See also Marie Loretto Lilly, *The Georgic*, Baltimore, 1917, Chap. III. Gothein suggests that the Virgilian influence came through Rapin, II, 391. As Burgh's notes suggest, Mason borrowed many details from widely divergent sources. See J. Aikin, *Letters from a Father to a Son*, London, 1800, Letter VI. Modern versions of the Abdalonimus story had appeared in Fontenelle's *Abdalomine*, in a libretto of Metastasio, and in Cowley's *Country Life*, line 13 *et seq.*

[8] *Works*, I, 354. In general, Burgh seems to voice Mason's opinions. The didactic poems of the period seem to have been intended for instruction as well as literature. See *Mon. Rev.*, LXXX, 337; *Crit. Rev.*, XXIII, 461; XXXIII, 171-173. Indeed, Henry Jones wrote his *Kew Garden* with such deadly accuracy that he even appears to have composed it "with the help of a botanic dictionary." (*Crit. Rev.*, XXIV, 315.)

books.[9] His first book is primarily concerned with showing that the æsthetic basis of gardening, as of painting, is "a well choosen variety of curves[10]"; and this he opposes to the architectural quality of "judicious symmetry of right lines," which had formerly dominated garden-construction. Book II applies this theory of natural curves to the ground plan of the garden, and advocates the winding of "common foot-paths" and the sinking of fences so as not to obtrude their straight boundaries. Book III clothes the landscape with "natural ornament," wood, and water[11]; and Book IV takes up "artificial ornament," so far as Mason allowed it, fountains, statuary, and buildings. The topics are mutually exclusive; they cover the whole field; and they progress in logical order. In its main divisions, the plan is well organized.

But, even so, *The English Garden* is not easily comprehensible at a reading. In detail, it is far from coherent. The many digressions, narrative and lyric, are largely to blame; and, even when Mason remains didactic, he is just as likely to talk politics or religion or what-not, as to stick to fences or barn-yards. The Abdalonimus episode is characteristic: it takes up over a hundred and thirty lines of Book II, and has nothing to do with wood and water as garden ornaments, beyond the fact that the sage hero lived in a hyper-luxuriant Syrian jungle. This passage, like the descriptions of tiger and elephant hunting in Somerville's *Chace*, a poem praised by Dr. Johnson for its "transition and variety," [12] was doubtless inserted, consciously or unconsciously, to lessen the tedium of which the author was doubtless half aware. In Book IV, the Alcander story quite takes control; and the architectural adornments, which are supposed to form the chief subject, become

[9] The division into four parts appears also in Somerville, Dyer, Grainger, and Darwin, and seems due to Virgil's influence. It was often very artificial: Dyer had to go as far a-field as the wool-trade to find matter for Book IV of *The Fleece;* and Book IV of Grainger's *Sugar Cane* became a moral discourse on the treatment of negroes.

[10] See Mason's *General Postcript* to the edition of 1781. This was the vulgate doctrine of the day. Cowper wondered that gardeners did not quarrel with the sunbeams "because, forsooth, they are rectilinear." (*Letters*, ed. Wright, III, 301.) Chambers objected to this type of garden because of its likeness to "vulgar nature." (*Dissert.*, ed. 1773, *Preface*, v.)

[11] Here the *Postcript* interpolates a comparison to Virgil's *Georgics*. This method of taking up the subject was quite the usual one. Cf. Sir William Chambers, *Dissert.*, London, 1773, and Anon., *Observations on Modern Gardening*, reviewed in the *Crit. Rev.*, XXIX, 427 *et seq.*

[12] See Johnson's note on Somerville in the *Lives of the Poets*.

merely an occasional background, rather unhappily forced into the story. Sometimes the narrative passages crowd out material essential to the exposition: Book IV provides barns and henhouses and even a duck-pond, but barely mentions a residence for the owner of the live-stock and poultry.[13] Sometimes, as in Book III, the difficulty is a lack, not so much of plan, as of proper summary and transition. Sometimes Mason misleads us by stating a plan which he does not follow[14]; and sometimes his summaries are far from inclusive.[15] In detailed execution, he had no more architectonic power in didactic poetry than in drama. For all his wisely-chosen and well-ordered main headings, he managed to omit the essential and to digress into the unimportant.[16]

Closely allied to Mason's plan is his didactic method. Pure exposition may be useful and necessary; but the geometrical theorem and the chemical formula are hardly things of beauty; and Mason would probably justify his many digressions as oases amidst homiletic aridity. His first three books are definitely constructed upon this principle; and the result is not always happy, for he jeopardizes the clarity and coherence of his main argument, without gaining any great relief. Unfortunately, the subjects on which he chose to digress are seldom of interest to the present age — even if they were to his own. Mason's own biography, partisan politics, and learned historical asides are not apropos; and his conventional *obiter dicta* on Art and Nature, God and Man and Things, are particularly infelicitous as relief from didacticism! Book I opens with generalities upon Nature and "divine simplicity." There follows the "still expected" invocation to the Muses as "ye sister Powers," that "o'er my cradle dropp'd Those magic seeds of fancy, which produce A Poet's feeling and a Painter's eye." [17] Then come twenty lines on Mason's "desolated soul," and on "Memory" of his "meek Maria"; then twenty more, in the fashion of Gray, tracing the progress of painting from Greece to Rome, and thence to "Albion's sons"; and then almost as much again on Nature, with a veiled reference to *The Castle of Otranto*.[18] Nature, Mason says, is always beautiful — or at

[13] *Works*, I, 287.
[14] *Ibid.*, I, 218.
[15] *Ibid.*, I, 285.
[16] Just this fault seems to be the bane of the didactic poem, as a glance at the "arguments" commonly prefixed to each book of such poems shows.
[17] *Works*, I, 211 *et seq.*
[18] *Works*, I, 214.

least can easily be made so; "but Fancy here must lead, not follow Labor." [19] This subject is discussed, not very consequentially, for almost a hundred lines; and then the reader is suddenly enlightened to the effect that "Nature" means, not Nature, but Painting[20]! Apparently the "Fancy" which is to lead "Labor" is not that of the gardener, but of Ruisdael or Poussin, or Claude or Salvator.[21] Mason had never learned the lesson of Hobbes that definition is the first essential to discussion; and he uses such catch-phrases as "Nature" and "Art" and "Simplicity" with Protean intricacy of variation. Thus, having shown us his first principles through a pseudo-poetic haze, he directs our steps "to Imitation's realm," and passes on to a long history of gardening, tracing the art through Bacon, Spenser, Milton, Temple, Addison, Kent, Southcote, Shenstone, and "Capability" Brown. The book ends with a patriotic exhortation to the youths of Albion.

The subject-matter of Books II and III is less general, and the digressive material is, therefore, even more obvious. It begins with an apostrophe to Art; and, after discoursing eloquent nothings for almost two hundred lines and after drawing recondite illustrations from the Rosicrusians and "Amalthea's horn," from "Tamerlane's proud race" and the cedars of Lebanon, Mason finally comes to the point of declaring that sheep are likely to be a nuisance if they are allowed to browse in one's garden: *ergo*, at line 245, he decides that "we must expel the flock"; *ergo* fence-building. He then discusses several sorts of fences, tells how best to conceal them, and even poetizes the delicate subject of green paint. The last hundred and fifty lines are given over to the Abdalonimus episode. Of the book's six hundred verses, less than two hundred are actually given to the "ground-plan"—the alleged subject; and the digressions leave practically no space for Mason to discuss roads or the disposal of buildings. One judges that he chose his subject in order that he might talk about something else.

In Book IV, the didactic method is quite different, but certainly no better: in fact, the sentimental tale of Alcander and Nerina so

[19] *Ibid.*, I, 215.

[20] The interrelation of poetry and painting was common in Neo-classical thought. See Babbitt, *Rousseau and Romanticism*, 274. Howard's *Ut Pictora Poesis*, *Publ. Mod. Lang. Assoc.*, XXIV, 40 *et seq.*

[21] Cf. Shenstone, *Thoughts on Gardening*, and Thomson, *Castle of Indolence*, I, XXXVIII.

overshadows everything else that the work becomes a narrative poem with digressions *mal à propos* on gardening. Perhaps the reception of the previous books had not been so enthusiastic as Mason had hoped: at any rate, early in the fourth, he seems to have suffered a qualm:

> But precepts tire, and this fastidious age
> Rejects the strain didactic: try we then
> In livelier narrative the truths to veil
> We dare not dictate.[22]

Unfortunately, the veil is of the sort that envelopes, rather than discloses, the matter in hand: and, at the same time, the asides on gardening spoil the story. Logical coherence of exposition is thrown to the winds, while Mason tells his mournful tale of disappointed love. Appropriately enough, the story opens with Alcander's "duteous tear . . . on his father's grave." [23] The young man at once proceeds to improve the paternal estate with quasi-Gothic buildings. "One vernal morn," while he is superintending the construction of a marine cave, "the angry main" wrecks a vessel upon "the neighb'ring beach." [24]

> One tender maid
> Alone escap'd, sav'd by Alcander's arm,
> Who boldly swam to snatch her from the plank
> To which she feebly clung. . . .[25]

The tempest abates with miraculous precision. Mason, moreover, did not allow Alcander's common sense to prescribe a warm bed, rest, and a stiff toddy for the victim: the stern business of gardening must be attended to; and, promptly giving up the other passengers for lost, Alcander proceeds to combine love-making and a personally conducted tour of his estate, while the lady makes judicious comments on flower-beds, and demands a "woodbine bower" for herself — a rather forward request in view of so brief an acquaintance. One suspects that she has read Rousseau's *Confessions* and wishes to have a feminine equivalent of the hermitage. The enraptured Alcander assents to everything, and superadds an

[22] *Works*, I, 287.
[23] *Ibid.*, I, 287.
[24] *Ibid.*, I, 290.
[25] *Ibid.*

astonishing Ionic conservatory, with a statue in the middle, "the work of Attic art"[26]: apparently Alcander did not have any qualms as to expense; and the prudent reader would almost advise him to peruse Cowper's lines on "The omnipotent magician, Brown," who laid out an estate at such great cost that it had to be sold to pay the bill.[27] When it is finished, he leads her to it with decorous tenderness. She dissolves in tears, and declares that the war between England and France forbids their marriage. He hopes, and she pines — quite in the manner of Richardson's Clarissa — with "inward pangs, From grief's concealment"[28]; but that does not prevent her from taking a very healthy joy in feeding "the household fowl That trespass'd on the lawn" — and, all at once, the "delving hinds" must build her hen-houses, and a pond for "the downy race that swim"! With line 360, Mason feels that his duty to landscape architecture is done[29]:

> And is there now to pleasure or to use
> One scene devoted in the wide domain
> Its master has not polish'd?[30]

The rest of the book, about half of it, is wholly given up to incoherent incident and sentimental debauch, in the worst style of *Elfrida.*

Mason's effort to combine narrative and exposition has, up to this point, proved disastrous to both. The passages on gardening destroy all consecutiveness of plot and all verisimilitude of character. Nerina must read sermons in stones to her lover when she ought to be in bed; and he rhapsodizes instead of putting her there. She requires her "bower" with a speed that shames politeness, and proceeds to live on Alcander's estate in flat defiance of Dame Grundy. Are these the doings of a soul so refined that it cannot follow its heart's desire because of a wicked, cruel war? Even without the clogging exposition, Mason's story would probably have been bad enough; but the necessity of "bowers" and hen-houses gives it the *coup de grace.* The narrative, in like fashion, ruins the exposition. Book IV is supposed to be given to "artificial

[26] *Works,* I, 294.
[27] Cowper, *The Task,* Bk. III, ll. 766 *et seq.*
[28] *Works,* I, 296.
[29] The cell and the memorial at the end of the book are hardly more than mentioned.
[30] *Works,* I, 298.

ornament," grottoes and statuary and buildings; and yet Nerina, with natural feminine taste, discusses flower-beds, clearly "natural ornament," and matter for Book III. Alcander's house, moreover, as he inherited and did not construct it, is passed over very cavalierly[31]; and even the buildings he most discusses are in no wise placed in their natural or cultivated surroundings. In short, just as incoherence marked Mason's plan and his more purely didactic method in the first three books, so incoherence is the essential failing of Book IV when he tries to unite the narrative and the didactic.

As a practical manual, *The English Garden* is an unqualified and obvious failure. To the actual husbandman, it would prove as unintelligible as Wordsworth's peasant poetry[32]; and, as for the husbandman's master, it might influence his taste toward a more "Natural" mode; but its suggestions are too general and too incoherently disposed for any actual use. Only too truly did Mason style it an "Episodico-didactico-pathetico-politico-farrago, unlike anything that ever was written or will be written." [33]

The more strictly poetic aspects of *The English Garden* show the same weakness of the assimilative process that made the plan and method incoherent.[34] Mason's verse springs not from his emotions or ideas, but from the rules of the Neo-classical tradition modified by the genteel Romanticism of the mid-century: the meter is stiff and monotonous; the lines are sicklied o'er with a vapid sweetness; periphrasis and personification supply the tropic "ornaments," with a few faded metaphors and an abundance of artful rhetoric.[35]

The content of *The English Garden* is somewhat difficult to disengage on account of the unsatisfactory form in which it is cast; but some shuffling of pages reveals two distinct sorts: the material that has to do with gardening, especially gardening in

[31] *Works*, I, 287.

[32] This criticism is perhaps captious; for Mason says it is intended to appeal only to those "of classic ear" (*Works*, I, 310); and, in Book I, he addresses only the "blest youths" who went to Cambridge and took the Continental tour (*Works*, I, 213).

[33] Walpole *Letters*, Mitford ed., I, 137.

[34] The use of the closed couplet seems to have been a chief reason for the incoherence of detail. Contrast the spineless form of Darwin's *Botanical Garden* in couplets and the comparatively well-knit plan of Grainger's *Sugar Cane* in blank verse. But Mason could not plead this excuse.

[35] These matters have already been treated at length in Chapter VIII.

the so-called "English" style; and the material of a philosophical nature, which Mason probably thought gave English gardening its intellectual justification.

At least as early as 1502, technical garden literature begins; and Loudon gives almost a hundred and fifty titles of serious English works, not to mention those in Continental languages, down to 1772, when Book I of Mason's poem appeared.[36] Authors of such note as Sir Thomas More, Bacon, Evelyn, Cowley, Cotton, Locke, Temple, Shaftesbury, Addison, Chambers, Dodsley, and Shenstone[37] had composed more or less technical treatises — not to mention Spenser's contributions in the *Faerie Queene*, Milton's Eden in *Paradise Lost*,[38] and Fielding's description of Squire Allworthy's garden in *Tom Jones*.[39] English taste had evolved through several distinct stages. The Renaissance garden was a rather "stiff" affair, and like so much art of the period, was largely under Italian influence.[40] The French style imported at the Restoration was no less artificial,[41] with its long vistas, endless geometrical flower-beds, level grass-plots, fountains, and marble basins.[42] William and Mary introduced Dutch gardens, quite as formal, with their "topiary work, potted plants and shrubs, dwarf trees, and water works."[43] But the formal style is not indigenous or natural to the soil of England[44]; and with the decadence of the type, there came a strong reaction.

James's translation of Le Blond's treatise in 1703 seems to have started a revolt toward greater simplicity[45]; and undoubtedly there were such literary influences as Tasso's letter (1580), the gardens of Armide, Eden in *Paradise Lost*, and "Dufresny, sieur de La Rivière, auteur comique et dessinateur des jardins du roi Louis XIV."[46] Addison, Steele, and Pope championed the new taste[47];

[36] Loudon, *Encycl. of Gardening*, 1099 *et seq.*

[37] Many of these Mason omits in his historical review, Book I, l. 440 *et seq.*; and he also omits most of the more practical treatises by professional gardeners.

[38] See Mason, *Works*, I, 392.

[39] *Tom Jones*, I, ch. IV.

[40] Sedding, *Garden-Craft*, chs. III and IV, gives an extended treatment.

[41] Miss Reynolds begins ch. v with this type. See Sedding, ch. v. She does not mention him in her bibliography.

[42] Babbitt tests the Italian and French styles by both Romantic and Classic theory, *Rousseau and Romanticism*, 271 *et seq.*

[43] Reynolds, *Nature in Eng. Poetry*, 248.

[44] Sedding, *Garden-Craft*, 50, 57, etc.

[45] Reynolds, *Nature in English Poetry*, 251.

[46] G. Riat, *L'art des Jardins*, Paris, 1900, 5th part, ii.

[47] See also such fugitive pamphlets as that on Lord Cobham's gardens, advertised in the *Gent. Mag.*, XVIII, 384,

Bridgeman, Kent, and, later, "Capability" Brown gave it professional standing; and the rise of Romanticism,[48] with its exaltation of Nature, with its Chinese exoticism, and its Gothic archaism, helped to break down formal styles, Italian, French, and Dutch, and to establish the specifically "English" garden.[49] Before, Nature had merely supplied raw material for Art to mould; now, Art was allowed only to assist in a more complete Naturalness: winding, uneven paths were preferred to straight, level vistas; forest-oaks, to clipped hedges; and desolate ruins, to neat temples and fountains. The quintessence of Naturalness was finally achieved with the planting of dead trees in Kew Gardens; and emotional piquancy of woodland glades was freely reinforced with the dragons and other Chinese "horrors" of Sir William Chambers. Against these extremists, true exponents of the Natural School, like Mason, rose in revolt: Mason was romantic enough to emotionalize a woodland scene with becoming melancholy; but he had sufficient Neo-classical decorum to object to tearing the passion to tatters.[50]

Mason approached the subject of gardening as no mere theorist. His father had probably interested him in it as a child along with painting, music, and poetry.[51] As early as 1759, Gray had vouched for his knowledge of planting roses[52]; and Mason's "bowers" at Aston, "the work of his own hands," made their master chafe under his enforced residence at York.[53] Kilvert says that his garden was laid out with "taste"; and Mitford, who saw it many years later, puts Mason above Brown, Gilpin, Price, and "all others."[54] Hunter thus describes the garden about 1831:

> The general design is one irregular walk amidst shrubs and flowers, which winds around an extensive area, in which are grass-plots, flower-

Aug., 1748; and such popular works as John Lawrence's *Clergyman's Recreation*, London, 1714, which went through some nine editions in twelve years.

[48] The English garden was a mark of Romanticism also in France. J. Texte (107 etc.) gives, in his foot-notes, valuable bibliographical references, including *Le Jardin Anglais* by Mason, tr. into French, 1789.

[49] Just how far the political hegemony that England was acquiring in Europe gave rise to this characteristic and patriotic type of garden, is difficult to say. See Appendix F.

[50] Mason's objection to Chambers' Chinese gardening best appears in his satires, and is left to that chapter for consideration.

[51] Mason (*Works*, I, 217) definitely associates gardening and painting; and he probably studied them together.

[52] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 85.

[53] *Ibid.*, III, 28.

[54] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., I, xxv.

beds, and small groves of tulip-trees and other garden shrubs, with seats and arbors judiciously disposed, and here and there an opening for the prospect of the hills of Derbyshire seen toward the setting sun.[55]

At Gray's death, Mason erected to his memory an urn, a bust, a sculptured lyre, and a votive tablet in his garden summer-house, and thus dedicated it to Melancholy, Memory, and the other abstractions characteristic of Sentimental passion. Mason's fame spread among his friends. Hurd required his help with the garden at Thurcaston; and, years after Mason's death, "a long grass bank" was still called "Mason's Walk." [56] In 1767, Gray urged Mason to come to the garden of St. Johns, Cambridge, and "set it going"[57]; a few months later, Gray asked him to lay out Thomas Warton's seat at Old Park, and wrote Warton that the plans make a "pretty figure on paper." [58] In 1771-1773, Mason was arranging Lord Harcourt's flowers and shrubbery, and giving him suggestions for "the design of a garden-seat." [59] In 1777, he delayed visiting Walpole, so urgently did my lord require his services[60]; and, in 1778, he was planning a Gothic castle for the garden at Nuneham.[61] Montagu declared to Mrs. Delany that Harcourt had "such a flower-garden as excells every flower-garden which ever existed either in history or romance. Bowers, statues, inscriptions, busts, temples; all planned by Mason." [62] After this, Madame D'Arblay's judgment of it as "extremely pretty" [63] is rather tame. By 1782, Mason was "quite tired" of his "*métier jardinique*"[64]; and we hear little more on the subject.[65]

Mason's earlier writings, moreover, reflect this interest to a considerable degree. The odes and elegies, and to some extent the dramas, have a fair share of Nature description. As early as 1744, Mason wrote in *Musæus*:

[55] Hunter, *Doncaster*, II, 168. Apparently, the garden had not substantially changed. The "irregular walk" amidst trees and shrubs and flowers is quite consonant with Mason's opinions.

[56] Kilvert, *Hurd*, 69, 358.

[57] Gray-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., 411-414.

[58] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 165.

[59] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 33-34, 40, *et seq.* Cf. Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, I, 282.

[60] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VI, 506, n.

[61] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 49 *et seq.*

[62] Delany *Correspondence*, Sec. Ser., III, 100.

[63] D'Arblay, *Diary*, II, 479.

[64] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 77.

[65] See Delany *Correspondence*, Sec. Ser., II, 267; Gray-Nicholls *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., 184; and *Works*, I, 132-133.

> Nor did the shepherds, through the woodlands wide,
> On that sad day, or to the pensive brook,
> Or silent river, drive their thirsty flocks:
> Nor did the wild-goat brouze the shrubby rocks:
> And Philomel her custom'd oak forsook:
> And roses wan were waved by zephyrs weak,
> As Nature's self was sick:
> And every lily droop'd its silver head.[66]

This seems rather stereotyped; but, by 1755, Mason gives at least a suggestion of independent observation when his "woodbine shade With clouds of fragrance fills the glade."[67] His *Elegy* to Miss Pelham has its "cypress grove" adorned by choice "funereal" flowers, pansy, snow-drop, violet, crocus, not to mention the olive and the palm — with as much consideration of season and climate as a Mediæval flower-list.[68] Sometimes, he indulges in an actual bit of garden-scenery as the *Elegy Written in the Garden of a Friend.* His treatment is not really descriptive, but rather a mixture of technical analysis and emotional reverie.[69] He explains how the "one little acre" was so happily laid out, and, at the same time, luxuriates in pseudo-Arcadian felicity, far from the "world" and "Custom" and "vain Science" and "flattering Fortune's specious tale."[70] This *Elegy*, written in 1758, combines the two essential elements of *The English Garden*: exposition of Natural gardening, and exaltation of the Sentimental philosophy that justified it.

Mason's actual recommendations in garden-craft can best be explained under the headings that he himself chose for his last three books: ground-plan, natural ornament, and artificial ornament. The ground-plan of his gardening, like the organization of his poetry, and like his own garden at Aston, shows little classical regularity, but, at the same time, only a timid Romanticism. After a eulogy of rolling fields and winding foot paths, the poem declares in favor of a curvilinear principle, not only for the "embellish'd walk," but also for the "thicket, copse or wood," the rivulet, and the lake.[71] This principle, borrowed from paint-

[66] *Works*, I, 13-14.
[67] *Ibid.*, I, 19.
[68] *Ibid.*, I, 98.
[69] Here, as in *The English Garden*, Nature is used not for herself, but as an emotional excitant. Romantic art is essentially so aphrodisiac that it omits no means of being *"piquant et frappant."*
[70] *Works*, I, 102-103.
[71] *Works*, I, 238.

ing,[72] was in flagrant opposition to the rectilinear principles of the formal garden, which showed a mathematical symmetry borrowed from architecture. Mason will not even allow his curves to run with "sidelong parallels"; they must be "duly mixt with those opposing curves That give the charm of contrast." Not even the sides of the path are to be even; sun and shade are to be inadvertently mingled; and, if there is a rise to the left, one is not to "lift the gradual hill" upon the right. "Shapes unequal," are to "save That correspondent poise"; and "fair variety," we are assured, "assists the balance":

> . . . 'gainst the barren crag
> She lifts the pastur'd slope; to distant hills
> Opposes neighb'ring shades; and, central oft,
> Relieves the flatness of the lawn or lake,
> With studded tuft or island.[73]

The scene, however, must not be too horrid. Paths must not "writhe in convulsive torture."[74] The "yawning crags," must be hidden by sapling oaks that are "to tower in shapes romantic"; and ivy and wild thyme will help to soften the effect.[75] If, on the other hand, there is "some plain Of tedious length," it must be furrowed with "swelling hillocks"; if the vegetation is too "strenuous," the "sturdy axe" must "ingress give To the bright darts of day": so rills shall "glitter as they glide," and "dank caves, Free to Salubrious Zephyrs, cease to weep."[76] Everything then, is to appear in "opposing curves That give the charm of contrast." The straight lines and level plains of the classical garden and the jagged outline silhouette of broken cliffs dear to the later Romanticist, are alike to be eschewed. Winding paths with uneven edges are to meander through irregular patches of sun and shade, lawn and flowers, shrubbery and giant British oaks.

Variety and surprise govern Mason's plan[77]; and those simple lines that give the elements of unity, of coherence, and of limit, are not included. Fences are a necessary evil, to keep cropping

[72] For this borrowing of art in the period, see Sedding, *Garden-Craft*, 114; W. G. Howard in *Pub. Mod. Lang. Assoc.*, XXIV., 40 *et seq.*; and Irving Babbitt, *The New Laokoön*, N. Y., 1900, 27 *et seq.*, 37 *et seq.*

[73] *Works*, I, 238.
[74] *Ibid.*, I, 236.
[75] *Ibid.*, I, 240.
[76] *Ibid.*, I, 241.
[77] *Ibid.*, I, 218-219, 222.

sheep from spoiling the beautiful curves of foliage. To conceal these boundaries, he suggests a trench[78]; a thorn-hedge enforced by a railing[79]; or, better, a strand of hempen rope.[80] For Gothic or Chinese "milk-white palisades" tipped with red or gold, he has no desire; for the "sylvan scene Would fade, indignant at the tawdry glare." [81] If a wooden fence is necessary, let it be painted green; and he gives a handsomely poeticized recipe for mixing the correct shade.[82] But he assures us that the best fence is, after all, a guard of youthful rustics decked out in appropriate costume and playing at Arcadia in the middle distance.

Mason's theory of ground-plan has two parts: use curved lines wherever possible; and hide the lines that cannot be turned into curves. This conception is fundamentally Romantic.[83] Mason thought he championed the curvilinear principle because it gives the line most common in Nature, the outline of vegetation, the winding of rivers, the rolling of distant hills; but I believe he championed it rather because it was more excitant to his own emotions. It is a commonplace of design that the straight line is static as compared to the curve[84]; and I believe Mason really preferred the latter because of its subdued emotionality, rather than for any justification of external Nature. The curved line is not only dynamic, but also able to lure the eye into the distance, or, by confining it in a dense wood, to give a sense of that infinity with which Wordsworth wished to invest the "primrose by the river's brim." The winding path, moreover, with screening shrubs and trees, made possible a surprise at every bend; the sparkling brook and the gloomy shade gave contrast: "pale grief and pleasing pain" could haunt the melancholy gloom. Chambers tried even to introduce horror; but so far Mason would not go. His garden was for the specialist in gentle melancholy. Cliffs must not be really jagged; nothing, *too* rough. His lines are to wave, but not writhe. He is not willing to sacrifice grace

[78] *Works*, I, 245.
[79] *Ibid.*, I, 246.
[80] *Ibid.*, I, 247.
[81] *Ibid.*, I, 248.
[82] *Ibid.*, I, 249.
[83] Cf. the ground-plan of Kent's garden at Stowe, Sedding, *Garden-Craft*, 109 *et seq.*

[84] Of course, the circle is the most dynamic of all. Babbitt points out that reposelessness, "infinite, indeterminate desire," is a characteristic Romantic trait; *Rousseau and Romanticism*, 208, 211, etc.

and ease for a tenser emotionality. He is Romantic; but his is a Romanticism that has not quite broken with the exterior polish of Neo-classical decorum.

Book III, which takes up "natural ornament," wood and water,[85] likewise displays an early form of Romanticism. Mason rigorously bars the formal and classical. For set flower-beds he has no use; he adjures the plants to "mingle social" in "interposed society." [86]

. . . Wide must ye stand in wild disordered mood. . . .

Water-works and fountains,[87] "flat canals,"[88] and "trim cascades" [89] are an abomination unto him. Like the straight-line principle, they stand for regularity, symmetry, precision, limitation; they are no aid to melancholic reverie, but rather monuments to the energy and ingenuity of man; and the sentimentalist is not interested in energy or ingenuity.

To all this formal array, Mason opposes holly, box, privet, and English laurel, for they are "patient of the knife." His object is not to clip them into angular hedges, but to prune them for greater density so as to conceal unsightly objects and to produce a "tenfold shade." [90] They would doubtless be of use also to partition his curving path into parts and so make possible a surprise at every bend.[91] But not merely is vegetation to accentuate the curvilinear principle by its irregular masses, but it is to mingle[92] perfume and color,[93] sensuous impressions dear to the Romantic heart. The lilac and the syringa are especially recommended for their scent[94];

[85] Mason opens with a discussion of Vegetation, and an enthusiastic reference to Gray's favorite Linnæus, "the wond'rous Swede." Mason's attitude toward science here displays none of the distrust of the nineteenth-century Romanticist. Babbitt (*Rousseau and Romanticism*, 122, 138, 165, 179, etc.) points out this intimate relation between the two great naturalistic movements: the rise of Science and of Sentimentalism. This relationship seems to apply especially to gardening, for the increase of available shrubs and plants brought about by the study of botany, and by the naturalization of exotics, resulted in the possibility of a more various style.

[86] *Works*, I, 268.
[87] *Ibid.*, I, 275.
[88] *Ibid.*, I, 277.
[89] *Ibid.*, I, 279.
[90] *Ibid.*, I, 265-266.
[91] *Ibid.*, I, 218.
[92] Combinations of sensation are a common phenomenon of Romantic art: e.g., Wagner's musical dramas and Stravinsky's "colored music."
[93] The importance of *color* in Romantic æsthetics can best be studied in painting, where it has more and more encroached upon the domain of line and form, from Turner down through the Post-Impressionists.
[94] *Works*, I, 266.

and he recommends flowers of many hues, together with the variegations of green in summer, and the "dusky gold, or russet rays" in autumn.[95] Water, likewise, is to reinforce curvilinear irregularity and sentimental meditation. Mason urges caves,[96] and artificial streams in "bold, unbroken curves" — with the source and outlet deftly concealed.[97] Natural lakes, he says, are excellent; but small artificial ponds are liable to "dwindle into pools." [98] A "torrent," moreover, is quite in the best taste; and he supplies useful hints for its construction. Let the dam be covered with rocks and pseudo-petrified logs; and let the stream swirl along so as to produce the desired "noise" of water[99]; for "the sight and sound of water" were particularly grateful to Romantic reverie.[100] Thus, trees and shrubbery and gushing torrents are to be judiciously made up into a melancholy forest.

Mason's Romanticism, however, was, as we have often observed, a timid thing. He looked askance upon pine-trees because they grow naturally, and cannot be made to produce a screen or a shade according to his desires.[101] He objected to cedars and to dense vegetation when they blot out the view.[102] He urged pruning twice a year,[103] lest "Albion's garden frown an Indian wild." [104] The plants, although they stand in "disorder'd mood," must not be of "unequal size and discordant kind"; and he satisfies any Neoclassical qualms with the assurance:

> Yet in this wild disorder Art presides,
> Designs, corrects, and regulates the whole,
> Herself the while unseen.[105]

He condemned, moreover, "exotic wonders," [106] and made a terrible example of "a youth Of polish'd manners" who imported additions to his flora from Virginia, Gilead, and Ganges, and then had his conservatory wrecked by "Boreas in his frozen shroud."

[95] *Works*, I, 267.
[96] *Ibid.*, I, 274.
[97] *Ibid.*, I, 275-276.
[98] *Ibid.*, I, 276.
[99] *Ibid.*, I, 278-279.
[100] Babbitt, *Rousseau and Romanticism*, 281-282. Possibly Spenser's "trickling stream from high rock tumbling down," had something to do with this vogue (*Faerie Queene*, I, i, xli, 2); but even without Spenser, torrents would doubtless have come in for their share of Romantic appreciation.
[101] *Works*, I, 265.
[102] *Ibid.*, I, 269.
[103] *Ibid.*, I, 269.
[104] *Ibid.*, I, 274.
[105] *Ibid.*, I, 269.
[106] *Ibid.*, I, 270-271.

Mason's is a strictly English Romanticism.[107] As far as water is concerned, he is willing to go a greater length and accept it, even in its wilder forms; and yet I doubt whether he would have appreciated the ecstasies of Chateaubriand over Niagara even though he called "headlong floods" the "sublimer scene" of "Imperial Nature."[108] One judges that his emotional gamut was about broad enough to include any marine device that "natural" art could supply on the estate of an English gentleman; but that, like most Romanticists of the period, he would have enjoyed a primeval American forest about as much as he would have enjoyed the company of the noble savages who inhabited it.

The last book of *The English Garden* is concerned with "artificial ornament" and is a "kind of recapitulation of all that has gone before."[109] This "artificial ornament" is largely architectural. Mason, in his enthusiasm over Nature at the beginning of the poem, expressed a very poor opinion of "the garish turret's height"[110]; he consciously neglected the structural principle and the symmetry of line to which architecture is forced by the law of gravity to conform. But just as he modified primitive naturalness in Book III in favor of sentimental emotionality, so even more in Book IV, he brought himself to allow architectural structures, both those actually necessary for farming and those that were calculated to augment his sweet sadness.[111] Gothic was the predominant style, neither because it was especially fitted to his use, nor because he had any actual appreciation of the Middle Ages — indeed, he speaks of their "fell Tyranny" and "ruthless Superstition"[112]—but partly because he supposed Gothic to be characteristically English,[113] and partly because its suggestion of a ruined

[107] Mason, like many another Sentimentalist, combined a gushing Sentimentalism with a hard, narrow Nationalism. Mason had never, like Gray and Walpole, taken the "grand tour"; and an insular patriotism was, moreover, quite in the tradition of the didactic poems of the period. But the poem is not only patriotic: it is essentially Whig. Oaks are to be planted for the benefit of the navy (*Works*, I, 220). He associates the freedom of "natural" gardening with parliamentary rule (*Works*, I, 228), and shows no enthusiasm for royal prerogative or for "abhorr'd Democracy" (*Works*, I, 78).

[108] *Works*, I, 277.

[109] *Ibid.*, I, 366.

[110] *Ibid.*, I, 216, 386-387.

[111] He tried to save himself from inconsistency, *Works*, I, 286; but not very successfully.

[112] *Works*, I, 224.

[113] The patriotic excuse he gives for using the Gothic instead of the Classic style (*Works*, I, 299-300) seems largely to resolve itself into sham melancholy. It was not that he really loved England,

antiquity[114] gave particular opportunity for melancholy. The principles of Gothic, moreover, doubtless appealed to the eighteenth century as going with "English" gardening, just as Roman or Renaissance would harmonize with the Italian or the French landscape school. Mason, however, sometimes violates this propriety: his conservatory[115] is built "High on Ionic shafts," [116] and one judges that Mason here chose the classic style because its "theatric" and "sublime" proportions would lend a heightened setting to the melodramatic scenes of the Alcander narrative.[117]

Mason's conception of Gothic is not very elevated. It has not even the pedantic advantage of formal accuracy. The description of Alcander's residence suggests the *papier maché* effects of Strawberry Hill rather than anything that Mediæval architects ever built:

> Crowning a gradual hill his mansion rose
> In antient English grandeur: Turrets, spires,
> And windows, climbing high from base to roof
> In wide and radiant rows, bespoke its birth
> Coëval with those rich cathedral fanes,
> (Gothic ill-nam'd) where harmony results
> From disunited parts; and shapes minute,
> At once distinct and blended, boldly form
> One vast majestic whole! [118]

but that the presence there of actual ruins quickened his appreciation of artificial ones. Gothic is hardly more indigenous to England than Greek or Roman. It seems to have originated in France; and England seldom achieved more than a heavy Romanesque parody of its structural principle of counterbalancing masses.

[114] Gothic breathed its last about the beginning of the seventeenth century (if we except Jones's and Wren's "Oxford" Gothic). About 1750, Walpole began his novel residence at Strawberry Hill, "a copy of the latest and most debased Jacobean Gothic" (Eastlake, 45). Hurd, Warton, Shenstone, and Mason helped the revival. Beers discusses it in his *Eighteenth Century Romanticism;* but his Mediæval *Kulturgeschichte* is not to be trusted. R. Bloomfield's *Short History,* London, 1900, 98 *et seq.,* discusses the decline of Gothic in the Reformation; *The Rudiments of Ancient Architecture,* London, 1794, is a good source-book of the early revival; and J. Britton's *Antiquities,* V, London, 1825, is valuable in like fashion for the early nineteenth century; Eastlake's *Gothic Revival,* (See III) although dubious in matters of taste, is the best treatment as to fact.

[115] So Mason relented toward exotics after all! The inconsistency is typical.

[116] *Works,* I, 293.

[117] Mason is again indulging his *libido sentiendi,* when he makes room in his garden for "a sculptur'd bust of sage or bard" or "an urn . . . with votive lay inscribed, To freedom, friendship, solitude or love." (*Works,* I, 293.) These were obviously intended to awaken Memory and set the emotions gently vibrating. One is reminded of Mason's tablet to Gray in the garden at Aston.

[118] *Works,* I, 287-288.

The "majestic whole" is a complex anachronism: to begin with, the "spires" and the windows "from base to roof" belong not to a castle but to a cathedral. Spires are useless for defense, and windows in "wide and radiant rows" would be an invitation to the besieger. So much window-space, moreover, was impossible, even in churches, until a very late period, when the buttress was sufficiently developed to take the whole weight and thrust of the roof from the walls,[119] and, by that time, the nobility were beginning to desert the castle for the Tudor country seat.[120] Alcander's ice-house, an "old, disjointed, moss-grown stone, A time-struck abbey," [121] is equally ridiculous. But his barn is the *summa* of impossibility.

> "Draw we around yon knowl,"
> Alcander cry'd, "in stately Norman mode,
> "A wall embattled; and within its guard
> "Let every structure needful for a farm
> "Arise in Castle-semblance; the huge barn
> "Shall with a mock portcullis arm the gate. . . ." [122]

Pigeons shall be housed in "some tower rotund"; and "ev'ry buttress broad, Whose proud projection seems a mass of stone" shall "stall the heifer, and the steed." [123] This is quite in the style of Shenstone's *ferme ornée*.[124] The characteristic anachronism of the whole thing is that whereas Alcander's ancestral residence appears to be late Gothic, the barn which he himself erects is early. Mason's knowledge was not sufficient for him to grasp the evolution of the style.[125] It is satisfactory, neither as art, because of

[119] Of course the Sainte Chapelle in Paris is the classic example. It is characteristic of eighteenth-century Gothic to imitate late, often decadent, models.

[120] Cromwell, in Henry VIII's time, built himself a castle merely as a piece of archaic pleasantry; but, as a general thing, the Tudor noble lived in a house.

[121] *Works*, I, 289.

[122] *Ibid.*, I, 288.

[123] *Ibid.*, I, 289.

[124] *Works*, I, 288. See Reynolds, *Nature in Eng. Poetry*, 261-262, and Shenstone's *Description* of Leasowes, and his *Unconnected Thoughts on Gardening*, *Works*, London, 1764, II, 125 and 333. Southcote is the reputed inventor of the *ferme ornée*, Mason, *Works*, I, 395.

[125] Mason's learning, however, was considerable for his day; but it was distinctly inferior to the historical approach of Warton (*Observations on the Faerie Queene*, 1762, II, 184 *et seq.*) or of Bentham (*History of Ely*, 1771, 15. This is chiefly devoted to Romanesque). Warton actually recognizes the three styles, Early, Decorated, and Perpendicular; he calls them a "sort of Gothic Saxon," an Ornamental, and a "Florid" style. "Saxon" is still used for English Romanesque; and "Gothic Saxon" might pass as a name for Early Gothic.

its insincerity, nor for utility, because its "disjointed" abbeys are not very efficient ice-houses. To use an ecclesiastical style, every line of which expresses awe and aspiration, for an ice-house: could the rococo bad taste of the age descend to greater depths! But, even supposing that castellated and ecclesiastical architecture had been properly used, eighteenth-century Gothic was a poor thing[126]; and, for an expression of the age, it was unsuited: the ideal of safety as represented in the castle and the ideal of religious exultation as represented in the Cathedral, were not vital to the Georgian era; and the Gothic revival, at least in its earlier stages, expressed little more than a sentimental dilettantism.

Mason's other "artificial ornaments" are equally unhappy and equally characteristic of his age. At Nerina's death, Alcander raised "a hermit's cell" where "he and Melancholy" meant "To fix Nerina's bust."[127] It is quite in the style of the summer-house at Aston, and is of special interest as emphasizing once for all the fact that Mason, in his gardening, was moved by one aim, although he may not have realized it himself: the wish to awaken a sweet sadness, gently soothing, not too stirring, without fear of profundity or danger of real intellectual meaning or spiritual force.

Mason is an epicure of the languid emotions. The very lines of his garden stir with a pleasing movement. His giant vales give a tragic shade; his rustics and sheep, an Acadian charm; his Gothic ruins suggest the Mighty Past. His garden has a modish *préciosité* of sentiment. It supplied convenient machinery for titillating the emotions and, at the same time, for deluding oneself with a seeming return to the virtuous State of Nature. In its plan and ornament, the "English" garden was no more natural, in any sense of the word, than Marie Antoinette's barnyard. The fundamental reason for its being was melancholy, the melancholy of crepuscular Romanticism. Mason was not Titan enough to enjoy the emotional debauch of a Byron in the Alps, or Shelley's flinty cliffs of Caucasus. The clerical Mason would

[126] Dr. Burgh, in his *Commentary* and *Notes* to the later editions, did the best he could, and even essayed to set forth, in *five pages*, the whole essence of the Gothic castle and Gothic abbey. His type for the former is evidently borrowed from the ruin of Conningsburgh near Aston. Toward the end, Burgh takes up the tasteful construction of a Gothic "ruin."

[127] *Works*, I, 309.

doubtless have been shocked by the thrills of the Satanic Blake and by the anti-Natural vagaries of Huysmans. Romanticism, based upon the Dionysiac principle of shock and surprise, must constantly increase the stimulant as the *limen* of sensation rises. The classicist liked level plains; Mason preferred hillocks; Wordsworth, Rydal Mount; Byron, the Alps; Heredia, the Andes.[128] So the stimulant from natural sources had constantly to be increased. In like manner, the stimulant from artificial sources was increased: Mason liked melancholy shrines; Chambers made Chinese "Horrors" all the rage. The exotic and the archaic were explored from Chateaubriand through Gautier. In fact, the first problem of the nineteenth-century Romantic artist has been to increase the dose of thrills. Baudelaire finally added "a new shudder" [129] with his landscape of glass and tin; and Whistler was bored with every "foolish sunset." So the movement that talked so much about "Nature" finally ended in a *paradis artificiel*; for it really meant by "Nature," neither human Nature, nor even rural Nature, but its own craving for emotional excitement. The essential aim of Romantic art is not the true picturing of deep reality but the creation of an ecstatic moment when the reader, like Faust, will cry aloud: *verweile doch*!

As through a glass darkly, one sees these things in Mason — for all his compromise with Neo-classical decorum. Janus-like, he looked toward opposite poles: he has scrupulous unity in the main-headings of his plan; but he throws detail to the winds. He uses blank verse, but uses it monotonously. He employs alliteration, but in the fashion of Pope rather than of Shelley. He borrows similitudes from Nature, but it is the "Nature" of pastoral poetry. The lines of his garden must curve, but must not be jagged. His trees must grow naturally, but be subject to pruning. His Gothic must be ruined, and yet useful for barn and ice-house. Characteristic of a rococo age, he is an eclectic practitioner. This fact, together with the incoherence of his plan, makes the deeper part of his subject-matter particularly difficult to explore. This deeper substance, beyond the formal precepts on gardening, is primarily

[128] D. Mornet traces a parallel trend in the paintings of Watteau, Boucher, and Vernet, *Le Romanticisme en France au XVIIIe Siècle*, Paris, 1912, 12 *et seq.*; and E. Seillière finds a somewhat similar literary evolution, *Mal Romantique*, Paris, 1908.

[129] The phrase is Hugo's.

æsthetic; but it has also something of ethics, metaphysics, and religion. The material is interpolated in the fragmentary form in which it probably existed in his own mind. He laid claim to no systematic philosophy; and the piecing together of his ideas into any system is like solving a Chinese puzzle of which half the parts have been lost. It is, however, possible at least roughly to define his chief theories and to attach them to the philosophic systems to which they seem to belong.

The traditional attitude of mind in the eighteenth century, is commonly described as Neo-classical: it consisted of two elements, a classical element of Renaissance humanism, and a Christian element coming down through the Middle Ages and somewhat colored by the Reformation. By a sort of polite compromise, these two had coalesced into a fairly set standard. Calvinism and Jansenism had supplied "original sin" and an avenging Deity; Grotius and Hobbes described the State of Nature as a condition of war and misery; and Locke, with his theory of the *tabula rasa*, considered that all the good in man had to be educated into him. Whether one's sources are, like Calvin's, the Old Testament, or, like Grotius', the *jus gentium* of Roman law, Man, as such, was looked upon as a wretched, if not an utterly depraved, creature. The Christian ideal set up a rigorous discipline of imitation to educate Man to religious humility and awe; Christ was the model to be copied and the Church Fathers and the Saints pointed the way. The humanist also set up a rigorous discipline; but the ideal was proportion, decorum, poise, and urbanity, the classic gentleman.[130]

But this rigoristic pessimism was not long without its reaction. The checking of French aggression in the reign of William and Mary, and again in the reign of Anne, the subsidence of religious disputes at home, the growth of English trade, and finally the settling of the succession upon the House of Hanover, gave England peace at home and commercial prosperity abroad; and the Englishman's outlook upon the world grew much brighter. The

[130] For generalizations in this paragraph, as, indeed elsewhere in this chapter, I owe much to Professor Irving Babbitt of Harvard, his conversation, his lectures, and his book, *Rousseau and Romanticism*, Boston, 1919. I had, however, reached substantially this point of view before I either knew Professor Babbitt or read his work.

new optimism soon expressed itself in the thought and art of the age. Cibber started sentimental comedy[131]; and Shaftesbury turned the old ethics upside down, enunciated the beneficence of God and the benevolence of Man, and practically declared that the beautiful and the pleasing were *ipso facto* good. Hutcheson followed in his steps with a more systematized philosophy; and, in spite of Mandeville's cynical satire, the soft optimism spread rapidly into poetry.[132] Thomson's *Hymn* in *The Seasons* is a serious parody of Shaftesbury; Richardson is steeped in Sentimentalism; and the English Deist commonly floated in the luxurious haze of his own sense of innate benevolence. In destroying the old pessimism, Shaftesbury had destroyed the old ethics. The struggle between good and evil was gone; and in place of it, there was the rather flaccid, "God's in His heaven; all's right with the world." Rousseau took the next step, exalted Natural Man, popularized the idea that social conventions and institutions first brought death into the world and all our woe, and set France careering toward the Revolution. In art, the result was a mawkish lack of proportion and ethical evaluation. The mind need not be elevated nor the soul purified; but the senses and emotions must be pleased. Melodrama replaced tragedy, and *comédie larmoyante*, true comedy. The old philosophy may have been gloomy or even cynical; but the new tended toward spineless self-indulgence in emotional debauch.

Just as the form of Mason's verse and his theories of gardening combined elements of the Classic and the Romantic, so the philosophy of the poem is a mingling of the two. This mingling is no synthesis of elements in only apparent opposition: like Pope's *Essay on Man,* it is a maze of inconsistency; for Mason was not logician enough to realize that one statement implies others which cannot be rejected — at least not without some explanation. The essential difficulty is obvious: the didactic purpose of the poem is Neoclassical; the emotional precepts and episodes are Sentimental. It is consequently full of teachings the substance of which condemns all teaching as a waste of time. This inconsistency appears with Protean metamorphosis, in flat contradictions in the philosophy of the poem. Mason has no unified plan of life; and his ideas

[131] See E. Bernbaum, *Drama of Sensibility,* Boston and London, 1915. There is an analysis of Shaftesbury, 115 *et seq.*

[132] C. A. Moore, *Shaftesbury and the Ethical Poets in England, Publ. Mod. Lang. Assoc.,* 1916, 264 *et seq.*

on æsthetics and ethics vacillate between Neo-classical Rigorism and Romantic Sentimentality.

We have already seen that Mason's concrete precepts would lead to a mildly Romantic garden; but the theories with which he thought to support these precepts were sometimes at utter variance with his practical recommendations. Indeed, his careless use of undefined abstractions and his maladroit generalizations make a fine chaos of ideas. The æsthetic incoherence that marks the form of the poem is paralleled by its intellectual incoherence; and the result is a hodgepodge almost impossible to analyze. His æsthetics preach at once the doctrines of at least two opposing schools: Neo-classicism and Romanticism. The garden that Mason advocates is predominantly Romantic; but the theory he puts forth most is largely Neo-classical, partly Realistic, and, only in some degree, Romantic.

According to one of Mason's theories, "rules" and the copying of models are the methods of learning how to garden. According to this, neither external nature nor the artist's fancy should control. "Art," we are told, "presides, Designs, corrects, and regulates the whole"[133]; and Art apparently means some body of theory or practice outside wild nature and outside the artist's momentary impulse. He speaks of "Art's unerring rule" [134] — and then makes us wonder what he means by Art when he says in his next line that this rule "is only drawn From Nature's sacred source." It transpires, however, after all this complexity of word-catching, that Nature does not mean rural Nature nor human Nature, but Painting[135]; and the sum of the whole matter is: follow the great painters.[136] Raphael imitated "Attic sculpture"; let us imitate Raphael[137]; build "your Arcadias" upon Claude's pictures.[138]

> . . . sweet Painting, come
> To teach the docile pupil of my song,
> How much his practice on thy aid depends.[139]

[133] *Works*, I, 269.
[134] *Ibid.*, I, 211, 237, etc.
[135] *Ibid.*, I, 221.
[136] The use of painting to guide poetry is a regular part of Neo-classical theory. See W. G. Howard, *Ut Pictora Poesis* in *Publ. Mod. Lang. Assoc.*, XXIV, 40 *et seq.*
[137] *Works*, I, 221-222.
[138] *Ibid.*, I, 273.
[139] *Ibid.*, I, 217.

When we are not forming ourselves on the painters, "great Poussin!" or "Nature's darling, Claude" or the inevitable Salvator,[140] we may copy the actual gardens of Kent, Southcote, Shenstone, or Brown.[141] According to this, the æsthetic method is the purely Neo-classical one of rule and imitation[142] — although the models followed are at least somewhat Romantic.

In some cases, Mason defines the rules to be drawn from these sources. Of course the curvilinear principle in its various ramifications is of first importance. He assures us that "ideal beauty" is easy to grasp: painting teaches us that it consists of melting "in fluent curves whate'er is straight, Acute or parallel." [143] These curves "charm us at once with symmetry and ease." [144] How Mason expected to achieve "symmetry" after destroying every vestige of balance, proportion, and coherence of ground-plan, is not explained. He seems to have used the word without any consideration as to its meaning; but the mere use of it shows that he thought he was still following a classic conception of art. Again, the *dictum* to avoid "false extremes," [145] sounds classic, and it must be admitted that Mason's Romanticism was not extreme. The exaltation of Simplicity, moreover, is essentially classic — although Mason's actual recommendations have no simplicity about them. Gray saw the fatal inconsistency of Classic and Romantic in the poem, and like a true classicist, advised Mason to "rein with Reason's curb fantastic Taste"[146]; and at the beginning of Book III, Mason dutifully promised to follow rules[147] — whereupon he misapplied or ignored them more than ever. In short, scattered up and down *The English Garden*, is a complete body of the Neo-classical æsthetics. Follow rules and copy models: such and such, the chief rules; such and such, the best models. The fact that the rules are often Romantic and the models regularly so, is beside the point; the copy-book method of art is Neo-classical.

Realism, likewise, is implicit in Mason's pages, mingled in the very passages that are most Neo-classical. We are to progress

[140] *Ibid.*, I, 219.
[141] *Ibid.*, I, 231.
[142] On the theory of imitation in the eighteenth century, as applied to poetry, music, and painting, see an article by the present author in *Publ. Mod. Lang. Assoc.*, Sept., 1921.
[143] *Works*, I, 222.
[144] *Ibid.*, I, 237.
[145] *Ibid.*, I, 237.
[146] *Ibid.*, I, 263.
[147] *Ibid.*, I, 263.

by copying; and the thing we are to copy is, of course, Nature, "Great Nature" which "scorns control." [148] Sometimes, to be sure, "Nature" means painting; but sometimes it seems to be External Nature. Early in the poem we learn that no spot is "inauspicious" [149] for cultivation: Nature is always good. *Ergo*, what have we to do but to follow the natural Genius of the place? [150] We are to give ear to "Nature" rather than to "mechanic Order." [151] Mason objects to forcing "the stream Beyond his native height" [152]—and yet he has no qualms at aqueducts, viaducts, or even dams.[153] The poem is full of such conflicts between theory and practice.[154] Gardening, he says, has "higher forms of Beauty" than painting, for it is more natural; and yet he bids us copy from the landscape painters.[155] At times he weakens this stringent Naturalism, and allows art to be called in, but "Only to second Nature" [156]; and elsewhere he assures us that Art draws her laws from Nature, and adds that "Nature and she [Art] are one." [157] Architecture, however, is not one with Nature, and is treated as artificial ornament.[158] Occasionally, he even comes to the point of criticizing Vegetation because it always keeps on growing.[159] So the perplexing jugglery of Art and Nature goes on. According to this system, Nature supplies at once the material, the method, and the end of gardening. But according to the Neo-classical with which it is constantly connected, the material is as much human buildings as natural scenery; the method is to follow models, and the result is not the forest primeval or even rural scenery but a studied rusticity, artistically insincere and much more artificial than the frank formalism of the classic garden.

Mason's æsthetics, however, are Romantic as well as Neo-classical and Realistic. "Fancy" is at once his theatre-manager and the aim of his art. She must "lead, not follow Labour" [160]; she must direct the raising of hillocks, the "form each sluice shall

[148] *Works*, I, 213-214.
[149] *Ibid.*, I, 214-215.
[150] *Ibid.*, I, 239-240.
[151] *Works*, I, 222. The combination of Nature and ideal beauty makes the meaning of "Nature" uncertain.
[152] *Works*, I, 275.
[153] *Ibid.*, I, 278.
[154] Of course, Mason really objects only to the artificial cascades of the Italian gardens; but his denunciation really condemns also his own artificial "torrents."
[155] *Works*, I, 230.
[156] *Ibid.*, I, 227.
[157] *Ibid.*, I, 270.
[158] *Ibid.*, I, 286.
[159] *Ibid.*, I, 273.
[160] *Ibid.*, I, 215.

wear," and the "course" of the water. He puts the rhetorical question:

> . . . and can Fancy fail
> In sweet delusions, in concealments apt,
> And wild creative power? She cannot fail.[161]

Not only is she to guide the work, supply pseudo-Naturalness to the landscape and insincerity to the architecture, but she is the end and aim of it also. Whatever awakens her "young Fancy" is to be desired: "rocks, and caves, And huddling brooks, and torrent-falls divine" are her "life spring" [162] and therefore to be recommended. She stages the scene to gratify herself with the result. Fancy, not imitation of Nature, was the true sponsor for Mason's gardening, and sad sweet reverie was the gipsy way his Fancy loved to follow. The proof of it is that he changed those elements in Nature that did not conduce toward melancholic reverie, that he constructed torrents, pruned foliage, erected pseudo-Gothic ruins, busts "of sage or bard," and votive urns with lugubrious inscriptions. From painting, moreover, he took only the emotional curvilinear principle, ignoring mass, proportion, and composition, which it might also have taught him.

Thus, in the cold light of analysis, it seems that, in spite of all his fine talk of "rules" and "imitation" and "Nature," the æsthetic conception that had actual reality for Mason was a Romantic Sentimentalism that limited itself to the milder emotions. That his theoretical material is so full of catch-words from opposing schools can be explained by the fact that Romantic æsthetics was as yet incompletely developed and that, therefore, theoretical terms and ideas would have to be borrowed largely from other schools of thought.

Mason's ethics are quite as tangled a maze. Neo-classicism (as opposed to Sentimental Romanticism) looked upon the humanistic and religious discipline of Man as the essential aim of life. The goodness of a thing, therefore, was measured by its utility toward this end; and the Neo-classical critic judged a work of art, not by the extent or *finesse* of its emotional appeal, but according to its educative value — as he understood education. To him, beauty

[161] *Ibid.*, I, 216.

[162] *Ibid.*, I, 281.

was use; use, beauty. On a number of occasions, Mason expresses this very idea: "Pleasure" must be curbed for "Utility"; this does not harm "Beauty." [163] He allows his flocks to graze on the more distant part of the lawn, for "Beauty scorns to dwell Where Use is exiled." [164] This combination of use and beauty is his justification for the castellated barn and the monastic dairy; but where is the utility of the Ionic greenhouse, of pseudo-Attic statues, of tablets and funeral urns? In some cases, he tries to justify even some of his machinery of reverie on a strictly utilitarian basis. The dell that is to give bucolic inspiration to the poet, shall also supply "great Nature's ample tome" for the scientist "to number and to name . . . the insect tribe." [165] Mason can justify sheep-raising, entomology, and other incidents of his garden on a utilitarian basis; but utilitarianism supplies no justification for a pleasure-garden as such.

For such a justification, Mason turned to sentimental philosophy. Nature and the State of Nature are sinless; but Man has fallen from primitive bliss. Mason hopes that this natural virtue may be re-attained when "Old England's Genius wakes." [166] Like Godwin and the Prefectibilians, he looks for regeneration through collective, not individual effort.[167] Meanwhile, apparently, the individual may sport with Amaryllis in the shade. This sporting, moreover, as in Wordsworth, is supposed to bring wisdom. There's "not a rill," says Mason, "but reads thy soul A generous lecture"[168]; and "sylvan haunts," and "celestial Solitude" are better than "hireling Senates":

> Nurtur'd thus
> In tranquil groves, list'ning to Nature's voice
> That preached from whispering trees and babbling brooks,
> A lesson seldom learnt in Reason's School,
> The wise Sidonian lived.[169]

Meanwhile a tyrant ruled his people; "Yet was his soul at peace, a gardener's cares, His only thought. . . ." The Sidonian's "wis-

[163] *Works*, I, 241.
[164] *Ibid.*, I, 235-236.
[165] *Ibid.*, I, 216-217.
[166] *Ibid.*, I, 310-311.
[167] Mason never gives a full exposition of this theory; but he echoes fragments of it again and again. He evidently looks forward to the time when, by a revolution such as that of 1688, a sort of millennium will be ushered in.
[168] *Works*, I, 281-282.
[169] *Ibid.*, I, 252.

dom" seems to have consisted in enjoying a sort of Wordsworthian "wise passiveness." In this state of inconsequential reverie, the creation of pure Beauty is apparently the chief end in life. A supreme beatitude is reserved for him who can achieve it; for "Beauty, like Virtue, knows no groveling mean." [170] The Sentimentalists had long before twisted the Good and the Beautiful into an inextricable tangle[171]; and Mason is steeped in their ideas. He who makes an artistic garden shall feel "the warm, the self-dilating glow Of true benevolence"[172]; and rustics must surely be virtuous and innocent, for their "limbs Are shapely." [173] Such a philosophy breaks the connection between motive and action, a connection essential to ethics and to the growth of a strong, unified personality; and, at times, Mason's biography illustrates just this disjunction. His daily actions move in a conventional round, largely governed by the habit of conformity to Neo-classical rule and line. Mason's personality lacks its natural force; for the emotional energy and gusto that should vitalize his actions, is largely misdirected into sentimental dilettantism. Thus, the actions of his life lack idealism and great purpose; and the emotional background of his literary work seems theatrical and is artistically insincere.[174]

With such a system of ethics inherent behind a veil of crass Utilitarianism, the religious ideals implied in the poem are hardly consistent with anything like orthodox Christianity, Calvinistic or Catholic: indeed, the only religious suggestions in the whole four books, aside from an attack on Rome[175] and another on Puritanism,[176] is a hymn to the "Parent of Good," copied direct from Shaftesbury, or at second-hand, from Thomson.[177] Nature is wise; Beauty, good; God, all-forgiving; and Man is essentially happy and virtuous. Milton's "fair original impress" in *Paradise Lost* mirrors for Mason the Rousseauistic Golden Age.[178] Through the evil of government, Man's innate loveliness has been cabined,

[170] *Works*, I, 277.

[171] See Shaftesbury, *Regimen*, Rand ed., 184 *et seq.*, Fowler, 134 etc.

[172] *Works*, I, 285.

[173] *Ibid.*, I, 251.

[174] Not without truth, does Mason admit that one of the deepest emotions, grief, had for him a "solemn luxury" (*Works*, I, 307). The luxuriating in emotion is the very essence of Sentimentalism.

[175] *Works*, I, 224.

[176] *Ibid.*, I, 308.

[177] *Ibid.*, I, 256.

[178] *Ibid.*, I, 228.

cribbed, confined; and he has fallen from the joyous State of Nature. But Mason's Fancy can still picture this superlative State. The Arcadian rusticity of sheep and meadows

> . . . impels the song
> To roll in bolder discant; while, within,
> A gleam of happiness primæval seems
> To snatch me back to joys my nature claim'd,
> Ere vice defil'd, ere slavery sunk the world,
> And all was faith and freedom . . .[179]

Christian salvation by Faith and Works does not appear in Mason. In true Whig fashion, he appears to associate the social evils that Rousseau attributed to the existence of government, with the Tory Ministry of the 1770's. "Old England's Genius" [180] is to awake, like a benevolent Titan, "The scourge of tyrants, and his country's pride," [181] and is somehow to accomplish a general regeneration. The doctrine of the Redemption, the central fact in his weekly preaching, seems never to have occurred to Mason: a striking illustration of the inconsistency between the facts of his biography and the point of view of his literary work.

The English Garden is an excellent example of minor eighteenth-century Romanticism. And the foregoing analysis serves to show the strange commingling of Sentimental Emotionalism with the Neo-classical blending of Humanism and Christianity. Thus, Mason's gardening exemplifies an early stage of Romanticism: the ground-plan discards parallel lines and right angles for "fluent curves," but does not allow jagged irregularity; the "natural" ornament must be subject to the spade and pruning-knife; the "artificial" ornament must seem to grow from the landscape, but is in fact a medley of sentimental bowers and tablets, imitation castles, and sham abbeys. The philosophy behind the poem is essentially inconsistent. Art's chief business cannot be both instruction by precept and entertainment by Romantic reverie. The rules kill the reverie, and the reverie takes all coherence from the rules. The ethical precepts, moreover, are ill-related: we cannot at once believe that Man is basically bad and that Man is basically good;

[179] *Works*, I, 242.
[180] *Ibid.*, I, 310. Is this phrase a pleasant euphemism for the York Association and Mason's similar schemes?
[181] *Ibid.*, I, 220.

or that institutions and conventions are Man's one salvation from original sin, and that they are the whole cause of his degeneration from innate virtue. Mason did not think for himself; he reflected indiscriminately the seventy jarring sects in the thought of his day. The brief but great popularity of his works confirms their momentary typicality. He was the man of his generation and the weakness of his thought and personality was a common weakness. *The English Garden*, his *opus magnum*, sums up the literature, gardening, æsthetics, and ethics of early English Romanticism, and illustrates that stage of Sentimentalism, in which the philosophy had begun to govern the thought of the average Englishman while the events of his life still ran in the old channel marked out by the beliefs and ideals of an earlier century.

The popularity of *The English Garden* is amply attested by magazine reviews, by contemporary diaries and letters, and by more or less certain influence on later poetry. Its publication in instalments multiplied its magazine notoriety. Book I appeared in 1772. The *Gentleman's Magazine* seems to have considered the poem to be possessed of real poetic beauty; but it criticized the intellectual haziness, objected to the use of simplicity to mean "Faultlessness," and felt that Mason violated delicacy in attributing to himself "a Poet's feeling, and a Painter's eye." [182] The *Critical* declared: "The beauties of Mr. Mason's piece impress themselves strongly on the imagination.[183] . . . The poem is by no means unworthy of the author of *Elfrida* and *Caractacus*." It gave a long excerpt, and concluded with an admonition not to fail to "peruse" the work.[184] The *Monthly* discussed it at length with much quotation: barring some critical abatements, the reviewer "gratefully" acknowledged "uncommon entertainment." [185] In 1777, Book II appeared: the *Gentleman's* gave it a brief review[186]; the *Critical* found it "excellent"[187]; and the *Monthly* considered it "highly acceptable to votaries of the sylvan Muse." [188] The next year, the *Gentleman's* printed J. Boerhadem's poetical epistle *To Mr. Mason on his "English Garden"* [189] in which Mason is

[182] *Gent. Mag.*, XLII, 78-79.
[183] N. B. the Romantic phraseology of this eulogy.
[184] *Crit. Rev.*, XXXIII, 171.
[185] *Mon. Rev.*, XLVI, 219 *et seq.*
[186] *Gent. Mag.*, XLVII, 331-332.
[187] *Crit. Rev.*, XLIV, 312-313.
[188] *Mon. Rev.*, LVII, 79.
[189] *Gent. Mag.*, XLVIII, 536.

classed with Virgil; and, the year after, the *Monthly* gave brief mention to Book III.[190] The same periodical allowed almost ten pages to the complete four books which were put upon the market in January, 1782; it praised the poem considerably, and gave much quotation.[191] On the same occasion, the *Critical* rejoiced that "This elegant poem . . . is at length complete," and seemed favorably inclined toward the "postscript" of the "ingenious author."[192] The edition of 1783 with Dr. Burgh's notes was declared by the *Monthly* "very acceptable to the public"[193]; and the *Critical* thought the notes "instructive and entertaining."[194] But a change set in. The French Revolution drew a sharp line between Radical and Reactionary, between Romantic and Augustan. The political followers of Godwin took little interest in the insular patriotism of Mason; the followers of Wordsworth and Coleridge saw only the timidity of his Romanticism. The Reactionaries, on the other hand, probably looked on him with some suspicion: the Tory *Quarterly* found *The English Garden* in 1816, "neither the most poetical nor vigorous" of Mason's compositions; and it complained that Mason, "fond as he was of plants," was "no regular botanist"[195]: science had outgrown its dilettante swaddling clothes; and the didactic poem fell before the prose treatise. The popularity of Mason's *English Garden*, as testified by the reviews, hardly survived the century.[196]

The mention of the poem in diaries, letters, and books supports this conclusion. Walpole wrote Mason that a certain Lord "has taken your garden for Gray's, and did not like it. We [Walpole and Harcourt] are both very glad of both, and I am sure you agree with us."[197] Anna Seward found Mason's "dignified [*sic!*] Nerina," the "poetic superior" of Thomson's Amelia, Lavinia, or Musidora; she wept copiously over the episode, and declared that the heroine's death had "Homeric accuracy."[198] D'Arblay referred the story of Abdalonimus to Cowley's mention of the "gardner king of Sidon" at the beginning of *Country Life*.[199]

[190] *Mon. Rev.*, LXI, 76.
[191] *Ibid.*, LXVI, 405-414.
[192] *Crit. Rev.*, LIII, 9-13.
[193] *Mon. Rev.*, LXXIII, 390.
[194] *Crit. Rev.*, LXI, 72.
[195] *Quart. Rev.*, XV, 379-381.
[196] It was not unknown in America. See *The N. Y. Nation*, CI, 714.
[197] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., Apr., 1777, I, 286.
[198] Seward, *Letters*, IV, 365. What an appreciation of Homer she must have had!
[199] D'Arblay, *Diary*, V, 245. Burgh's note (*Works*, I, 402) gives a fine flourish of sources, Latin, French, and Italian.

Polwhele converted Sir William Elford to the admission that "the more he read the more he liked" the poem.[200] In 1774, Jermingham[201] printed a eulogy *To Mr. Mason, the day before he published his "English Garden"*; the *Gentleman's* in reviewing Jermingham's "elegant" *Poems*, printed in full the verses to Mason.[202] But the greatest praise is from Warton in his famous *History of English Poetry* (1774-81). He says that English didactic poetry was "brought to perfection by the happy combination of judicious precepts with the most elegant ornaments of language and imagery in Mason's *English Garden*"[203]; and Drake echoed the praise.[204] But fifty years after Warton, Southey declared the "last Book of the Garden . . . in every respect, miserably bad."[205] Other times, other customs!

Mason's work had for a while some serious consideration as a technical treatise. Richard Payne Knight's *The Landscape*[206] shows Mason's influence. The Abbé Delille, in the later editions of *Les Jardins*, found it necessary to make a formal denial of having borrowed from Mason,[207] and complimented the English author on his work.[208] Richard Polwhele's *English Orator* seems to have been influenced by Mason's *English Garden*.[209] Humphry Repton[210] in 1788 applied to Anna Seward for an introduction to Mason[211]; but, in his *Inquiry into the Changes of Taste in Landescape Gardening* (1806), he criticized, rather adversely, Mason's views of the relation of painting and gardening.[212] Taste was changing; and the didactic poem was going out.[213]

[200] Polwhele, *Reminiscences*, II, 175.

[201] See Bettany, *Edward Jermingham and his Friends*. The letters of Temple, Potter, and others are valuable; the notes are full but neither complete nor accurate.

[202] *Gent. Mag.*, XLIV, 276-277.

[203] Warton, *History*, ed. London, 1871, IV, 229.

[204] Drake, *Literary Hours*, 191.

[205] Commonplace Book, 4th Series, ed. 1850, 295-296.

[206] *The Landscape, A Didactic Poem in three Books, addressed to Uvedale Price, Esq.*, London, 1794. G. W. Johnson in his *Hist. of Engl. Gardening* ascribes this poem to Mason.

[207] Delille, Jacques, *Les Jardins*, Paris, 1803. See *Preface*, vii. The *Monthly*, LXIX, 167, declared Delille's poem a "formidable rival" to Mason's.

[208] Sieveking, 398, thinks that the Abbé far surpassed Mason "both for matter and manner."

[209] See Havens, *Influence of Milton*, 376.

[210] A famous landscape gardener in his day. See *D.N.B.*, *sub* Repton, 1752-1818.

[211] Seward, *Letters*, II, 172.

[212] Repton, *op. cit.*, 128.

[213] The *Europ. Mag.* of 1802 (XLII, 424) furnishes capital proof of this in a mock didactic poem on *The Art of Candle-Making*. It prints the argument of two books, a "fragment" and copious notes, and, in two and a half pages, manages to satirize most of the shortcomings of the type.

The English Garden was built upon passing fashions in poetry and in gardening; it was a rococo thing, poorly articulated and as inconsistent and shifting as the synchronous fashions that gave it being. Like many another work of a mediocre personality, the greater its pretensions, the more miserably it failed; and Mason, holding forth on ethics, metaphysics, and religion is a sorry sight. His age, however, did not feel this as acutely as do we; for the poem was too much the mirror of its period to seem odd to Mason's generation: to a later generation, surveying it with the cold eye of scientific analysis, it seems a poor thing; but suffice it to remember that this ill-assorted mass of incoherence served the average educated Englishman as a working philosophy during the latter eighteenth century; and the illogical hesitancy of such men as Mason to put their theories to the test of social experiment undoubtedly was a factor in saving England from the stress and strain of revolution in the 1790's. The philosophy of Mason and his contemporaries was illogical but it served a great historic purpose: the peaceful transition to the new ideals of the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER XI

MASON'S SATIRES

IF Mason's *English Garden* in part reflects the Neo-classical reaction in the 1770's, his satires are a purely Neo-classical production; for they are patent imitations of Pope, Dryden, and the Latin tradition. They came out at intervals during the 1770's and early '80's, and voice primarily their author's protest against the American War and the Tory policy of George III. The first two were anonymous; and most of the others were written under the pseudonym, Malcolm Macgreggor. The Walpole-Mason correspondence proves Mason's authorship beyond question[1]; and Walpole, although he told the Countess of Ossory that he had not the ability to write the *Heroic Epistle*,[2] seems to have supplied most of the detail. Indeed, Warton was partly right in suggesting that the poem was "written by Walpole and *buckram'd* by Mason."[3] Mitford says that Walpole "furnished the notes and illustrations of the text, and conducted the poem through the press."[4] Croker[5] points out that the letters give evidence that Walpole supplied the detail and that Mason did only the literary execution; and he had "good reason for thinking that the first thought was furnished by Walpole"[6] and that "Walpole's subsequent suggestions . . . were many and important."[7] The ambiguous terms in which the letters are couched make it impossible to know the exact relations of the collaborators; but it is fairly obvious that Walpole supplied most of the content and Mason did the writing. Combe, the famous "Dr. Syntax," has been charged

[1] See Chapter V.

[2] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VI, 44.

[3] Boswell, *Johnson*, Hill ed., IV, 315.

[4] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., I, xiii. Mitford is probably wrong in the latter statement.

[5] Croker cites proof at length from the letters to show that Walpole did not see the poems through the press. Undoubtedly, Baynes (or Baines) was Mason's agent for the sale and revision of *The Dean and the 'Squire*; and he probably did the others. *Quart. Rev.*, LXXXIX, 151-152. This review has every appearance of careful and scholarly work; but it is very slashing. It attacks Mitford's labors as editor and also the characters of Walpole and Mason.

[6] *Quart. Rev.*, LXXXIX, 143.

[7] *Quart. Rev.*, LXXXIX, 143, 146.

with helping Mason; but the assertion has yet to be proved, and there is no need for any such supposition.[8]

Walpole and Mason were both old hands at satire. As early as 1748, Walpole was composing a satire *à la* Dryden[9]; and in 1755 he sent Gray three satires in heroic couplets, one of them his own.[10] About this time, he wrote the satirical *Letter of XoHo to Lien Chi*; and his *Hieroglyphic Tales*, composed in 1771-2,[11] contain veiled attacks on George III and on ministerial corruption.[12] According to Mitford, Mason's "satirical powers were dormant at no period of his life."[13] Only two years after commencing B.A., he wrote *Isis*.[14] He may have joined Balguy and Allen in composing *The Academic* against Keene's regulations.[15] In 1755, he addressed some clever verses to Lady Holdernesse, and boasted to Gray: ". . . You are nothing like me at an impromptu."[16] Two years later, he sent Gray an *Epigram* which the latter "dared not show"[17]; and, early in 1758, he was evidently meditating a lampoon probably against King George II[18]; and his spleen seems to have vented itself in the ode *To Mr. Jolliffe*.[19] Gray declared him "on the road to fame" but advised anonymity.[20] Mason has even been credited with part authorship in Gray's "Jemmy Twitcher" satire,[21] composed in the 1760's. The letters of both Mason and Walpole, moreover, suggest that both had a rather well-developed aptitude for satiric expression.

Croker, in a series of detailed articles in the *Quarterly*,[22] enlarged upon the thesis that Walpole's ruling passion was the safe-

[8] See review of Hotten's *Life of Dr. Syntax*, *N. and Q.*, 4th Ser., III, 547-548.

[9] *Correspondence of Gray, etc.*, Toynbee ed., II, 92-93.

[10] *Ibid.*, II, 155-156.

[11] Havens, *Horace Walpole*, 66, and Toynbee *Letters*, X, 366.

[12] See Walpole, *Works*, 1798, IV, 324, 327, 329, etc.

[13] Mitford, Gray-Mason *Correspondence*, Preface, xii.

[14] *Works*, I, 179.

[15] See Chapter II.

[16] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 277-279.

[17] *Ibid.*, I, 350.

[18] *Ibid.*, II, 2-3.

[19] *Ibid.*, II, 6-12.

[20] *Ibid.*, II, 14.

[21] See Fanny Burney, *Early Diary*, ed. Annie Raine Ellis, 1889, II, 125-126, n.

[22] See reviews of the various parts of Walpole's MSS. and correspondence that appeared in the mid-nineteenth century, as they were discovered, a few volumes here and a few more there; *Quart. Rev.*, XXVII, 178 *et seq.*; LXXII, 516 *et seq.*; LXXIV, 395 *et seq.*; LXXVII, 253 *et seq.*; LXXXIII, 110 *et seq.*; LXXXIX, 135 *et seq.* These six reviews, although they may be distorted by Tory prejudice for George III, are masterly in their way; and I do not find that the recent biographers of Walpole give any adequate answer to the serious charges they make against his character. See *D.N.B.*, *sub* Walpole, L. Seeley, 10 *et seq.*; A. Dobson, 30 *et seq.*; A. Greenwood, 122

guarding and increasing of his own sinecures, that he regularly applied to each successive ministry for unreasonable favors and additions to an income already swollen by political jobbery,[23] and that, on the refusal of each ministry, he turned against them with a series of flagrant libels, all composed, with the basest hypocrisy, in the vein of high patriotism and righteous indignation.[24] According to the reviewer, the Mason-Walpole satires were but one link in a chain of abusive documents that began with the *Memoirs of George II* in the early '50's.

To Mason, likewise, he imputes a purpose far from disinterested. He describes him as "a *reverend* pluralist, the creature of Royal and aristocratical patronage, holding *five* ecclesiastical preferments (two of which were wholly and two others nearly sinecures)." [25] Whether the places were really such sinecures is open to serious question[26]; but the charge that Mason had a "*disappointed appetite*" for further preferment may well be true.[27] This disappointment, together with a slight at the hands of royalty,[28] is alleged as Mason's motive for resigning his royal chaplaincy and turning court satirist. This may have been, and, indeed, very probably was, a contributing cause; but it is also true that a Whig like Mason, glorying in the liberties won in 1688, had ample reason, without any personal motive, to attack the extreme Tory government of the 1770's.

et seq.; *Letters of Gray, Walpole, etc.*, I, xxxv *et seq.* That Walpole was eccentric to the point of monomania seems doubtful in spite of the evidence adduced (See LXXII, 524 *et al.*); but the relation of his friendships and his quarrels to his politico-financial schemes has considerable plausibility; and the scandalous question of Walpole's extraction and of his relations with Mrs. Clive demand some attention from any serious biographer (LXXII, 523, 543).

[23] The reviewer seems to justify the thesis that Walpole, late in life, made "at least £6,300 from three sinecures and two riders." *Quart. Rev.*, XXVII, 198 *et seq.* and LXXIV, 397 *et seq.*

[24] *Quart. Rev.*, XXVII, 199 *et seq.*

[25] *Quart. Rev.*, LXXXIX, 155-156. The italics are in the original.

[26] The rectorship at Aston was certainly no sinecure, in spite of the assistance of a curate. The Canonry at York required three months' continuous residence, morning and evening prayers, and sermons—and Mason, contrary to common practice, often composed his own sermons. Mason must have been eminently fitted for the Precentorship, if the new hymn-book and the *Essays on Cathedral Music* mean anything. The Prebend of Driffield was regularly attached as an emolument to the Precentorship. The Royal Chaplaincy required the arduous visit to London every year. Much of Mason's income, moreover, unlike Walpole's, came from private sources, chiefly the bequest of John Hutton who died in 1768. See Chapter VII.

[27] *Quart. Rev.*, LXXXIX, 158 *et seq.*

[28] *Quart. Rev.*, LXXXIX, 167. *Walpoliana* is, however, of dubious credibility, see Bibl. B.

Indeed, the period was one of political reaction. George III had determined to follow his mother's mandate and "be King." He had slowly rid himself of the powerful Whig families, split into factions since the fall of Sir Robert Walpole. The Jacobite danger ended at Culloden; and the king was not slow in cultivating the Tories, English and Scotch. In the course of time, he turned the corrupt parliamentary system of Walpole against the Whigs themselves, and made his rule a veiled despotism during the ministries of Bute and North. The Whigs perceived this with increasing alarm; and it is unfair to say that this alarm was entirely anger at the loss of prestige and preferment. In Mason, there was a deep-seated reverence for constitutional liberty, narrowed by class-selfishness perhaps, but undeniably sincere.[29] It is evidenced again and again in his non-satiric poetry; and his effort for parliamentary reform in the York Association shows that he really believed the country in danger from the corruption of its representatives.[30] Walpole may have had ulterior motives in collaborating in the satires[31]; but, in Mason,[32] such motives seem rather secondary if they existed at all; and, indeed, the reviewer himself is not quite certain of his ground.[33]

The first and most famous of the Mason-Walpole satires was the *Heroic Epistle to Sir William Chambers Knight, Comptroller General of His Majesty's Works, and Author of a Late Dissertation on Oriental Gardening. Enriched with Explanatory Notes; Chiefly Extracted from that Elaborate Performance.*[34] The title and the earlier part of the poem mainly have to do with Oriental gardening, especially with the fantastic ideas that Chambers[35] had brought to England from China or picked up in books that pur-

[29] For instance, in January, 1761, he journeyed to York in the midst of winter "to choose a proper candidate for Knight of the Shire for this great, good, and opulent county." (*Harcourt Papers*, VII, 17.)

[30] See a number of pamphlets on the Wilkes case, mentioned in *Gent. Mag.*, in 1768-9, for example. See Indices.

[31] My arguments in this paragraph apply very little to Walpole; and I think the reviewer in the *Quarterly* has a much stronger case in attacking his motives than in attacking Mason's. Walpole, for instance, had no use for parliamentary reform, a significant fact when one remembers that such reform would probably have swept away sinecures—five of which composed his sole source of income.

[32] Even the reviewer is constrained to admit that Walpole believed Mason to be honest in his parliamentary efforts. *Quart. Rev.*, LXXXIX, 169.

[33] *Quart. Rev.*, LXXXIX, 159.

[34] London, 1772.

[35] For a life of this notable personage, see *D.N.B.*

ported to be travel or history.[36] Chinese influence, however, was no new thing in the arts of Europe: it had invaded furniture and table-ware; Murphy's *Orphan of China*, taken from Voltaire, was but one of several plays on Chinese subjects; and the fashion for Oriental tales[37] and for satires built upon pseudo-Oriental material had been exemplified many times since the appearance of Montesquieu's *Lettres Chinois*. Chinese taste, according to Walpole, was founded by Richard Bateman[38]; but Chambers brought the taste to its height — or its *reductio ad absurdum*. In 1757, when he was but recently returned from studying architecture in Italy, he published his *Designs for Chinese Buildings*. In the early '60's, the Princess Augusta employed him in remodelling the gardens at Kew; and there he introduced some of his Chinese novelties.[39] George III made Chambers Comptroller General, and the taste spread rapidly. Walpole knew him and professed "a good opinion"[40]; and Gray thought his style "beautiful."[41] Even before Chambers had published his *Designs*, however, satire had seized upon Chinese taste; and, during 1753 and the two years following, *The World* contained at least six papers directed against it.[42]

In 1772,[43] Chambers published his famous *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening*. Walpole says it was written "in wild revenge against Brown"; and, indeed, professional jealousy may well have dictated the *Preface* and some of the extreme *obiter dicta* of the text.[44] The *Critical*, subservient to the royal *protégé*, declared the public "indebted to Sir William Chambers," but gave the book only half a page[45]; and the *Gentleman's* merely listed it without comment.[46] The taste which it recommends is in avowed reaction against the "natural" school, exemplified in the works of Brown, and praised by Mason in his *English Garden*. Artifice is its keynote, not the dignified formality of the Italian or French Garden,

[36] See *D.N.B.*, *sub* Chambers.

[37] See Martha Pike Conant, *The Oriental Tale in England in the Eighteenth Century*, New York, 1908.

[38] Walpole *Letters*, Toynbee ed., XII, 11.

[39] See Cosmo Monkhouse in *D.N.B.*, *sub* Chambers.

[40] Walpole *Letters*, Toynbee ed., VII, 435.

[41] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 26.

[42] *The World*, Nos. XII, XV, LIX, CXVII, CXVIII, CXIX.

[43] It was published in the spring of 1772; *Crit. Rev.*, XXXIII, 413, and Walpole *Letters*, Toynbee ed., VIII, 170.

[44] See Monkhouse in *D.N.B.*, *sub* Chambers.

[45] *Crit. Rev.*, XXXIII, 413.

[46] *Gent. Mag.*, XLII, 333.

but a phantasmagoria supposed to appeal to every sense and to raise every emotion. All sorts of trees, shrubs, flowers, beasts, and birds were insufficient to compose Chambers' Chinese "wilderness of sweets." [47] There were artificial grottoes "adorned with incrustations of coral, shells, ores, gems, and crystallizations, refreshed by rills of sweet-scented water, and cooled by fragrant, artificial breezes." There were luxurious pavilions of "rose-wood or cedar" for favored concubines, with aviaries, and basins of fish.[48] There were "structures . . . disposed amongst the branches like nests of birds." [49] Indeed, there were miniature towns where the court might play at tradesman and pickpocket for the diversion of the emperor.[50] There were scenes of terror: "gloomy woods, deep vallies inaccessible to the sun, impending barren rocks, dark caverns, and impetuous cataracts rushing down the mountains from all parts." [51] Trees were to be "forced out of their natural directions," and thrown down to "intercept the course of torrents"; but the climax of this garden-melodrama demands literal quotation:

> . . . buildings are in ruins; or half consumed by fire, or swept away by the fury of the waters: nothing remaining entire but a few miserable huts dispersed in the mountains; which serve at once to indicate the existence and wretchedness of the inhabitants. Bats, owls, vultures, and every bird of prey flutter in the groves; wolves, tigers and jackalls howl in the forests; half famished animals wander upon the plains; gibbets, crosses, wheels, and the whole apparatus of torture, are seen from the roads; and in the most dismal recesses of the woods, where the ways are rugged and overgrown with poisonous weeds, and where every object bears the marks of depopulation, are temples dedicated to the king of vengeance, deep caverns in the rocks, and descents to gloomy subterraneous habitations, overgrown with brushwood and brambles; near which are inscribed, on pillars of stone, pathetic descriptions of tragical events, and many horrid acts of cruelty, perpetrated there by outlaws and robbers of former times: and to add both to the horror and sublimity of these scenes, they sometimes conceal in cavities, on the summits of the highest mountains, founderies, lime kilns, and glass-works; which send forth large volumes of flame, and continued clouds of thick smoke, that give to these mountains the appearance of volcanoes.[52]

There were to be artificial rain, moreover, artificial cries of men in torment and of ferocious animals; and one is to be surprised

[47] Chambers, *Dissertation*, 29.
[48] *Ibid.*, 30-32.
[49] *Ibid.*, 34.
[50] *Ibid.*, 36 *et seq.*
[51] *Ibid.*, 40.
[52] *Ibid.*, 40-41.

by "repeated shocks of electrical impulse." [53] So Chambers draws upon his imagination and that of the authors he follows. The work is an epitome of decadent Romanticism, tugging at its bootstraps to raise itself to an artificial elevation.

Of all the arts, gardening was perhaps the most advanced in the Romantic trend — probably because it is inevitably associated with Nature. The "English" garden came into being at the opening of the eighteenth century, reached a sort of climax in Kent and Brown, later called in the exotic and the melodramatic for novelty, and so showed signs of artificiality and decadence — all before painting, poetry, or music had even begun to be thoroughly Romantic. Mason, as a follower of Kent and Brown, had no use for these wild innovations; and it was under the cover of his very natural attack on Chambers' theories that he launched his political shafts against the government. The occasion was particularly apt; for Chambers was in royal favor, and his Chinese vagaries gave the hint of a corrupt and despotic court.

The *Heroic Epistle* starts with an apostrophe to Chambers, as "Knight of the Polar Star" [54] and "the Cynosure of British taste"; but, as early as the sixth line, it introduces George III as his patron; and ten lines farther on, it makes ironical reference to various friends of the king. This, however, seems a mere digression; for, at line thirty-five, the *Epistle* is back at Chinese gardening again; and, for the following fifty lines, Mason makes solemn fun of Chambers' fantasticality. He ridicules the Knight's objection to Nature and her "tedious chime" of "water, plants and ground." [55] The "August Pagodas" as exemplified at Kew [56] receive the satirist's attention. Chambers' voluptuous descriptions are not forgotten [57]; and suggestions are put forward for the practical construction of a garden of horrors in the vicinity of London:

> Now to our lawns of dalliance and delight,
> Join we the groves of horror and affright:
> This to achieve no foreign aids we try,
> Thy gibbets, Bagshot![58] shall our wants supply;

[53] *Ibid.*, 43.

[54] An order conferred on him by the King of Sweden.

[55] *Heroic Epistle*, ll. 46-48.

[56] *Ibid.*, ll. 68-70.

[57] *Ibid.*, ll. 75 *et seq.*

[58] A place of executing condemned criminals. Mrs. Toynbee's annotations (Walpole *Letters*, VIII, 257 *et seq.*) supply a very interesting commentary on the poem.

> Hounslow, whose heath sublimer terror fills,
> Shall with her gibbets lend her powder mills.
> Here too, O King of Vengeance, in thy fane,
> Tremendous Wilkes shall rattle his gold chain;
> And round the fane on many a Tyburn tree,
> Hang dire fragments of Newgate-history:
> On this shall Holland's dying speech be read,
> Here Bute's confession, and his wooden head . . .[59]

From this point, the satire is almost purely political. Mason's ire is directed especially against the Scotch, whom the king had recently been raising to power. The Scotch were especially hated by Englishmen of both parties: Johnson's prejudice is well known, and Walpole's is often apparent. It was particularly the Whigs who reviled their less opulent fellow-subjects of North Britain, whose advent to power had displaced themselves. Churchill, the satiric mouth-piece of Wilkes, directed against them his *Prophesy of Famine,* and numerous shafts in his other works. Mason's attack was four-fold: he hated the Tory politics of Bute[60]; the summary justice of Lord Mansfield[61]; the religion, or lack of religion, of Hume[62]; and the literary ethics of "Mac-Ossian."[63]

Against placemen and courtiers, Mason is no less bitter. Home[64] is attacked, chiefly, it would seem, because he was Scotch and was given a pension by the Princess of Wales.[65] David Mallet[66] added to being a Scot and a Deist the less venial sin of a rather discreditable career.[67] Dr. John Hill[68] was gardener at Kensington Palace.[69] Just which "Scot"[70] aroused Mason's ire is difficult to ascertain[71]; but the hit at Dr. Johnson in the same line, was obviously occasioned by his pension; and Shebbeare, the

[59] *Heroic Epistle,* ll. 81 *et seq.*
[60] *Ibid.,* l. 92.
[61] *Ibid.,* l. 128.
[62] *Ibid.,* l. 21 *et seq.*
[63] *Ibid.,* l. 29.
[64] *Ibid.,* ll. 27-28.
[65] Walpole *Letters,* Toynbee ed., IV, 56; and XI, 384.
[66] *Heroic Epistle,* l. 31, also spelled Mallock.
[67] This is so if one may trust the long note in Churchill's *Works,* 1804, I, 128. See also Dinsdale's *Life* prefixed to Mallet's *Ballads,* London, 1857, 39 *et seq.* In 1763, Mallet was appointed keeper of the Book of Entries, a position worth £300. Dinsdale's copious notes give further references. Byron gave Mallet an unenviable fame in his *English Bards,* ll. 378-379.
[68] *Heroic Epistle,* l. 19.
[69] Walpole *Letters,* Toynbee ed., XVI, 138. Hill disgusted Walpole, Gray *Letters,* Tovey ed., II, 200 and 201.
[70] *Heroic Epistle,* l. 19.
[71] See Scott, index to Walpole *Letters,* Toynbee ed.

Jacobite journalist who stood in the pillory in the reign of George II, and came into favor with George III,[72] received an ironical reminder of his former disgrace.[73] Dr. Thomas Nowell's famous sermon on January 30, 1772, comparing George III to Charles I, received its due meed of praise.[74] Sir Fletcher Norton, the butt of Churchill in *The Duellist*,[75] was celebrated for his sinecures, valued by Walpole at £4200 a year.[76] "All the minor plunderers of the age" are instanced in passing: Rigby, whose record in Ireland was not above suspicion[77]; Mungo, whose fame seems lost in oblivion[78]; Bradshaw, whom Walpole elsewhere damned as rapacious.[79] Even "Parson Horne" (the Rev. John Horne-Tooke) with his "bishopric" of Brentford is remembered[80] for his dabbling in politics and his turning against Wilkes in 1771[81]; and "Jemmy Twitcher," Lord Sandwich, "that babe of grace, Who ne'er before at sermon show'd his face," is introduced to hear Nowell preach on divine right.[82]

These are merely the court. Mason has stepped from Chambers to Chambers' compeers; and, from the court and government, he does not hesitate to pass to the sovereign himself. The lines against George III have been severely condemned by Tory critics, as an unseemly attack upon the king; but when one allows for satirical exaggeration, they seem to be in large part justified by His Majesty's evident desire for personal rule:

[72] Walpole *Letters*, Toynbee ed., IV, 26, 189, *etc.*

[73] *Heroic Epistle*, ll. 19-20.

[74] *Heroic Epistle*, ll. 120-121. Walpole supplied Mason with this incident, Toynbee *Letters*, VIII, 184. Nowell's sermon caused a stir in Parliament and was famous at the time.

[75] Walpole says Churchill drew his character well; Walpole *Letters*, Toynbee ed., V, 442.

[76] *Heroic Epistle*, l. 122. See Walpole *Letters*, Toynbee ed., VI, 150.

[77] I have only Walpole's testimony, and that may be prejudiced. See Walpole *Letters*, Toynbee ed., V, 400, and VII, 150. The person who was to have occupied the following dash was Calcraft who had made a great fortune from army supplies (See *D.N.B.*); but his death prevented. Mason later regretted that he had not inserted Martin, Walpole's anxious reversionary. See Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, I, 60, 65.

[78] Was this a nickname?

[79] Walpole *Letters*, Toynbee ed., IX, 274.

[80] *Heroic Epistle*, l. 112.

[81] See Walpole *Letters*, Toynbee ed., VIII, 27, 44, 54, 427-428, etc. See also *D.N.B.*, *sub* Tooke, where a much fairer statement of the case is to be found than in Walpole or Mason.

[82] *Heroic Epistle*, ll. 123-125. Walpole probably did not supply this especial *bête noir*. Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 278. Mason, more likely, inherited it from his friendship with Gray—as he may have inherited also his objection to Hume.

> Be these the rural pastimes that attend
> Great Brunswick's leisure: these shall best unbend
> His royal mind, when e'er from state withdrawn,
> He treads the velvet of his Richmond lawn;
> These shall prolong his Asiatic dream,
> Tho' Europe's balance trembles on its beam.[83]

The miscellaneous character of the content of the *Heroic Epistle* — occasioned by the machinery of appearing to attack Chambers' gardening and of actually attacking the king, his court, his ministers, and his policies — produces, in the poem, a loose-knit structure that somewhat impairs its unity: the satire seems at once horticultural, political, literary, and personal. This centrifugal tendency appears to be an especial danger in the Juvenalian type of satire to which, I take it, Mason's verses belong; and the 'dear damned' couplets make it even more easy for one's Attic salt to crystalize into a series of unrelated epigrams. Juvenal usually unified a given satire by confining himself either to one vice or to the vices of one class of persons. It is so in the first satire, against political corruption; in the second, against hypocrisy as exemplified in Domitian; in the third, against the social degeneracy of Rome; and in the fifth, against the wretched state of clients. Dryden's Juvenalians usually confine themselves to a single political situation. Pope prefers not to "name queens, ministers or kings," and commonly models his satire after the more broadly social Horatian type. Churchill at his best, like Dryden, limits one satire to one subject. Mason, however, by his very plan of satirizing one thing under the guise of another, was forced to a looser unity, a less compact plan, and a less pointed general effect.

Like most of Mason's other work, the *Heroic Epistle* displays a poorly developed architectonic sense. The rhetorical and metrical detail, also, does not show a very full æsthetic grasp of the subject and its treatment. This condition seems to be due to the same latent inconsistencies that impaired *The English Garden*. There the sentimentalist was trying to write Neo-classical didacticism; here the semi-Romantic poet was attempting the forms of Pope. Mason imitated superficially, caught the more obvious de-

[83] *Heroic Epistle*, ll. 135-141.

vices, but often lost the sharper sting of his master's couplet. He imitated Pope well enough to satisfy Walpole, who had the latter's works by heart[84]; and Miss Gothein refers to Mason's "Popeschen Spott[85]; but even a cursory study reveals an essential difference. Perhaps it was this difference that Anna Seward felt when she declared the *Heroic Epistle* a "new species of satire."[86] I can hardly dignify it by any such name; indeed, one might better say that Mason exemplifies a certain stage in the decadence of the Neo-classical tradition.

Pope's use of the couplet is marked, above all, by a constantly recurrent termination of the thought with the line or at least with the second of the two rhyming lines. These end-stopped lines are very obvious and rather easy to imitate. His innumerable followers had no difficulty in catching this trick; but Mason has considerably fewer end-line pauses than Pope. In comparing the punctuation of the *Heroic Epistle* with the first hundred and forty-six lines in the *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, one observes that, although Mason punctuates less than Pope, and somewhat differently, yet, either through ineptitude or on purpose, he does not always cut his epigrams quite so truly to the measure of the verse or barb his shafts so nicely with the well-remembered rhyme. Of Pope's seventy-three couplets, sixty-six end in punctuation that marks the termination of a complete thought; seven of his lines end in commas or parentheses; and all of them have some final punctuation.[87] Of Mason's couplets, fifty-six end in grammatical completion; fourteen couplets end merely with commas; and three with nothing at all. In short, out of seventy-three couplets, seven of Pope's may possibly be counted run-on, and, by the same criterion, seventeen of Mason's.[88] A similar tendency to *enjambement* is to be found at the end of the first line of Mason's couplets.

Even though one admits that Pope punctuates everywhere more heavily than Mason, yet these figures have a certain significance.

[84] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., III, 108, n.

[85] Gothein, *Geschichte der Gartenkunst*, II, 383.

[86] Anna Seward, *Letters*, II, 86.

[87] Cf. W. E. Mead in his *Versification of Pope in its Relation to the Seventeenth Century*, Leipzig, 1889, 32 *et seq.*

[88] J. M. Beatty, Jr., finds this same quality in Churchill (*Publ. Mod. Lang. Assoc.*, XXXIV, 63 *et seq.*) and suggests Dryden's influence. In Mason, I think it is rather the rise of Romantic habits of thought and versification, or perhaps an imperfect grasp of Pope's technique.

The closed couplet was on the road to dissolution. The Romantic spirit was at work; and even an enthusiastic Byron, who thought it was "better to err with Pope than shine with Pye," has twelve run-on couplets[89] to Pope's seven. Mason, with his fourteen open couplets, is even farther from Pope than was Byron.

Another salient characteristic of Pope's style is the regularity of his meter. In the first twenty-five lines of the *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, eleven seem to my ear, slightly broken in regularity by some shift of accent.[90] The first twenty-five lines of *The Epistle to Fortescue* also yield eleven variant lines; and the first twenty-five lines of Mason's *Heroic Epistle* have eleven or possibly twelve breaks.[91] When one compares the first hundred lines of Pope's *Bolingbroke* with an equal number from Mason,[92] the result is thirty-five variants in Pope and either thirty-five or thirty-six in Mason. A comparison of the passages in sections of twenty-five lines, does not show such perfect identity; but the facts suggest that Mason's couplets had not moved very far metrically from the Neo-classical standard; and this is quite what might be expected when one calls to mind the regularity of his blank verse in *The English Garden*, and of his stanzaic lines in the *Odes* and *Elegies*.

Pope used his regular, end-stopped lines in a peculiar fashion. There was little space for transition-phrases; and so the need of coherence forced him to the extended use of balance and often of antithesis.[93] These gave his iambics a peculiarly waspish sting, a virtue quite different from the more virile thrust of Dryden. The first fifty lines of Pope's *Arbuthnot* have seventeen cases of parallel structure,[94] usually involving an expressed or implied antithesis; and in the following fifty there are seventeen more.

[89] See the first 146 lines of Byron's *English Bards*. Obviously, it would take much more counting than this completely to demonstrate the decadence of the closed couplet; but the theory seems reasonable.

[90] I count lines 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 15, 17, 20, 22, 24, and 25 as metrically regular. I did not consider variations in cæsural pauses.

[91] I count as regular, lines 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 14, 15, 17, 18, 22, 24, and 25. Line 10 is uncertain.

[92] Lines 1-100, *Heroic Epistle*.

[93] Just how perfect a parallelism of phrasing has to be and just how pointed an antithesis, before it is to be counted, is a difficult matter to determine. In the following comparisons, I have used a rather rough and ready judgment, not altogether scientific perhaps, but accurate enough to illustrate the point.

[94] I count lines 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 16, 25, 32, 34, 35-36, 43, 44, 46, 48, 50. Somewhat earlier work, such as the *Essay on Man*, would probably give an even higher percentage.

The first fifty lines of his *Fortescue* have nineteen, and his *Bolingbroke* the same number. Mason's style is less concise; and his sentences have less of this subtle piquancy. The first fifty lines of the *Heroic Epistle* have but nine cases of parallelism; and these are usually carried out in much less detail than in Pope. The second fifty lines have ten examples; and the last forty-six, nine. If these figures be characteristic, Mason uses balance only about half as much as Pope. Churchill's *Prophesy of Famine* has nine cases in the first fifty lines, and eleven in the second fifty.[95] In short, the proportion seems but little higher than Mason; and one is led to wonder whether the weakening of antithetical structure may not be a hall-mark of the decadence of the closed couplet. It is certainly true that the lack of balance and antithesis would oblige the greater use of transition-phrases, and give the sentences a greater wordiness and a tendency to overflow the confines of the line.

Pope is particularly happy in his use of anaphora. The repeated word serves at once to bind together the passage in closer coherence, to point his parallelism, and to emphasize the idea conveyed. The first hundred and forty-six lines of the dialogue with *Arbuthnot* have nineteen cases[96]; and his *Fortescue*, in the same space, has sixteen. In the whole *Heroic Epistle*, I count but nine. Mason uses anaphora not only less frequently than Pope, but also rather less finely. Pope's repetitions insinuate themselves into the consciousness; Mason's pound upon the ear. Pope uses them to link his lines with admirable craftsmanship:

> *What* walls can guard me, or *what* shades can hide?
> *They* pierce *my* thickets, through *my* grot *they* glide;
> *By* land, *by* water, *they* renew the charge,
> *They* stop the chariot, and *they* board the barge.[97]

One could read the passage several times, and never realize the anaphora, it is so changefully interwoven. Mason's art is less concealed:

[95] In all cases, the number of lines counted are too few to form the basis of absolute percentages.

[96] I count the following lines: 2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 15-19, 32, 34, 54, 57-58, 98, 132-133, 138, and 143-144.

[97] *Arbuthnot*, ll. 7-11. The italics are mine.

> Does Envy doubt? *Witness* ye chosen train!
> Who breathe the sweets of his Saturnian reign;
> *Witness* ye Hills, ye Johnsons, Scots, Shebbears,
> Hark to my call, for some of you have ears.[98]

Mason's satiric couplets are, then, a rather advanced point in the line of decadence from Pope. He is not so clever at compounding short, sharp epigrams that end with the line. He uses balance and anaphora less — and less effectively. His meter is a fair imitation; but meter was not the strength of Pope's technique; and the merest tyro can attain an interminable regularity of alternate stresses. Even granting all of this, however, Mason's *Heroic Epistle* could hardly be described as "feeble." [99] The technique, although inferior to Pope's consummate skill, is by no means bad; and the wealth of local allusions, largely supplied by Walpole, must have given the poem a fine spice of occasional application. For once, Mason is not writing dead aphorisms and cant generalities; his pen is sharpened with choice tit-bits of scandal and dignified by a real grievance against the crescent power of the king.

Sir William's *Dissertation* appeared in the spring of 1772. *The Heroic Epistle* was composed during the summer; but Almon "declined publishing it till the Town was full." [100] Finally, in the spring of 1773, the precious pamphlet was given to the world. Everyone read it: before the end of the year, eleven editions had come out; and, by 1777, a fourteenth was found necessary.[101] It probably caused, moreover, the new edition of Sir William's work that came out in 1773.[102] Both collaborators took great care to prevent suspicion of the real authorship. Even Almon was never let into the secret.[103] Walpole wrote Lady Ossory that the

[98] *Heroic Epistle*, ll. 17-21. Shebbeare was supposed to have lost part of one ear in the pillory. The italics are mine.

[99] Previté-Orton, *Polit. Satire*, 135.

[100] See *Preface*.

[101] See Bibl. A, and Chapter V.

[102] See Walpole *Letters*, Toynbee ed., VIII, 257.

[103] See *Mon. Rev.*, n. s., XLVIII, 105 (Oct. 1805). Almon categorically denied Mason's authorship. Mason's death, eight years before, would have absolved him from all reasons of concealment. As a matter of fact, we know that Mason regularly sold these satires through a representative, a young lawyer, Baynes (See Walpole, *Letters*, Toynbee ed., XII, 246, 255-256.), whom Almon took for the real author. Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, I, 67, 119, 122, etc. Almon, in 1805, denied that the *Archæological Epistle* was of the same authorship as the rest. Of course, this is a

poem was "said to be Anstey's," [104] and on March 27, 1773, he gleefully declared to Mason:

No soul, as I have heard, has guessed within an hundred miles. I caught at Anstey's name, and I believe contributed to spread that notion. It has since been called Temple Luttrell's, and to my infinite honour mine. Lord Nuneham swears he should think so, if I did not commend it so excessively! [105]

Six weeks later, Mason wrote back with a mock high seriousness:

I controverted none of his [Lord Holdernesse's] opinions, only as he seemed to think that the Epistle had merit, I ventured to say that I thought it worthy of Soame Jenyns, had it suited his polite sentiments, he replied "so it was, but S. J. would never have used that *harsh* kind of satire." From his Lordship's account I find that it is generally supposed to be Temple Luttrell's, although Almon declares it to be the work of a young man, and his first work.[106]

Mason's curious letter of disclaimer to Warton is well known.[107] Mathias, as late as 1794, had not been able to ascertain whether Mason was responsible for the satires or not[108]; and Hurd tried to find out from Cradock the authorship of the *Heroic Postscript*.[109] For Lord Harcourt, Mason took especial care to draw a red herring across the trail. His letter is dated from Aston, March 21, 1773:

My Lord,—the post after I answ'd your last, I receiv'd another curious poetical treat from you. You are exceeding kind to send me these sort of *bon-bons* to sweeten the bitterness of my village solitude. I cannot help owning (tho' my loyalty crimsons my cheek while I own it [!]) that I did frequently smile when I read that wicked Poem; I hear Mrs. Ann Pitt calls it abominably clever, & I adopt her expression; I am told too that Charles Fox says it is written by the Author of the 'Bath Guide' [Anstey], and I adopt his opinion. However, it is certainly better written than his Epistle to Buckhorse. The same intelligence adds that Mr. I. Pitt lays the brat at my door, but says I got it after I had taken a

mistake. See Bibl. A, and Walpole *Letters*, Toynbee ed., XII, 217, 229, 241, etc. Almon was evidently deceived by Macgreggor's *Certificate* of disclaimer at the end of *The Dean and the 'Squire*.

[104] Walpole *Letters*, Toynbee ed., VIII, 251.

[105] *Ibid.*, VIII, 257.

[106] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., I, 67.

[107] See Mant, *Memoirs*, in Warton, *Works*, 1802, I, xvii *et seq.*

[108] See Mathias, *Pursuits of Literature*, ed. 1797, 10, note q.

[109] Cradock, *Memoirs*, 183.

cup too much. Your Lordship knows me too well to suspect either my loyalty or sobriety, & therefore I think I need say nothing to prove my innocence on this head, or to induce you to clear me of so dreadful an imputation. But your Lordship says you like it exceedingly; if you do, I suppose it is chiefly because you think such taste, such times, & such politics as ours deserve rather to be laugh'd at than seriously satirized, and in this I agree with you; we want a Rabelais rather than a Boileau. . . .[110]

But truth will out. Suspicion soon settled upon Walpole and Mason. During the early nineteenth century, the *Heroic Epistle* and its sequels were usually fathered upon them; and, in 1851, when Mitford published their correspondence, the fact was ascertained.

The fame of the *Epistle* almost at once spread far and wide; for the time-being, at least, it far out-sold any single work of Churchill's.[111] Well might the *Heroic Postscript* exult:

> For now, my Muse, thy fame is fixt as fate,
> Tremble ye Fools I scorn, ye knaves I hate.

Appearing as an anonymous pamphlet, the *Epistle* at first provoked rather less comment than might have been expected. The *Gentleman's* took the piece as a *bona fide* poetical exposition of Chambers' views, and either saw no satire in it or pretended to see none.[112] *The London Magazine* praised the poem for its "very ingenious ridicule" of Chambers' theories and gave a long quotation, but omitted all reference to politics.[113] The *Monthly,* whose opinion

[110] *Harcourt Papers,* VII, 46-47.

[111] J. M. Beatty, in *Publ. Mod. Lang. Assoc.,* XXXIV, 62, refers to Churchill's satires "that unpolished, sold far better than did any of the smoother poems of Whitehead or Mason." I cannot conceive what method of comparison Beatty used: Churchill's chief works are his satires; and these can be fittingly compared only with the satires by Mason. If the *Brit. Mus. Cat.* be a safe guide, the *Rosciad,* Churchill's most popular poem, went through seven "editions" in 1761-2-3, whereas the *Heroic Epistle* went through eleven in a few months; and the *Heroic Postscript,* in an equal time, went through eight. The uncertainty, however, of the size of the "editions" (if they were really editions and not merely the old sheets with new title-pages) still leaves the subject open to some possible doubt. Churchill's early death made possible the collection of his satires into sets of *Poems* and *Works;* and, as Mason's satires were not collected until long after their occasion had passed, a comparison of collected editions is hardly pertinent. If Professor Beatty had in mind a comparison of all the writings by Mason with all by Churchill, he might well have noticed that *Brit. Mus. Cat.* lists many more entries under the former than under the latter.

[112] *Gent. Mag.,* XLIII, 290.

[113] *London Mag.,* XLII, 196-197.

of Chambers' *Dissertation* had not been high,[114] praised its "vein of fine solemn irony," [115] and quoted thirty-eight lines. It was not afraid to mention that "the K——" was "involved," but carefully neglected to print names in full.[116] The *Critical* gave no review until its June number; but it compensated for the delay by five and a half pages, which included not only two-thirds of the actual text with all its annotations, but also ample praise of the "beauties" and "delicacy" of the piece.[117] The *Critical* did not make any special point of the political satire; but it printed *in extenso* the bitterest lines against George III. At the time, the reviewers seem to have made no guesses as to the authorship; but, some years later, the *Annual* "supposed" it to be Mason's and declared it an "admirable piece." [118] In 1816, the Tory *Quarterly* was still irritated at Mason's "unpardonable insolence"[119]; and, even in 1851, while pointing out its influence on Peter Pindar, the *Quarterly* still looked upon it askance[120]: dislike may be a literary compliment.

But perhaps more significant than reviews are the private opinions of Mason's contemporaries. Cambridge is said to have composed forty additional lines.[121] Gibbon quotes from the *Epistle*, referring to Hume as "the fattest hog in Epicurus' sty." [122] Goldsmith read the *Heroic Epistle*, "with a running accompaniment of laughter." [123] Johnson, stout Tory as he was, "did not refuse his praise for its execution." [124] Hannah More thought it "the best satire, both for matter and versification" that had appeared since the *Dunciad*.[125] But Walpole furnishes the climax of anecdote:

> At this time was published an admirable poem, equal in wit and poetry to the Dunciad, though short. It was called An Heroic Epistle to Sir William Chambers on his Book of Gardening; and though ridiculing him, was a severe satire on the King and his chief tools. The King, expecting only an attack on Chambers, bought it to tease, and began

[114] *Mon. Rev.*, XLVII, 136.

[115] Mason afterwards took up this remark in the *Heroic Postscript*, line 37.

[116] *Mon. Rev.*, XLVIII, 314-315.

[117] *Crit. Rev.*, XXXV, 465 *et seq.*

[118] *Ann. Reg.*, 1796, 365.

[119] *Quart. Rev.*, XV, 379.

[120] *Quart. Rev.*, LXXXIX, 150.

[121] Walpole *Letters*, Toynbee ed., VIII, 301, n. 2.

[122] *Prothero*, I, 190. This line has found its way into Bartlett's *Familiar Quotations*, 393, and, with a variation, into Carlyle's *Past and Present*, Bk. III, Ch. V; Centenary ed., X, 156.

[123] Forster, *Goldsmith*, II, 221.

[124] Boswell, *Johnson*, Hill ed., IV, 113.

[125] Hannah More, *Memoirs*, I, 58.

reading it to him; but, finding it more bitter on himself, flung it down on the floor in a passion and would read no more. Lord Bristol, the best of courtiers, and as zealous as the Roman who swore to having seen the Emperor's soul fly to heaven, could not be persuaded to read the Heroic Epistle; he said from what he had heard of it, he would as soon read blasphemy — such pious servants has our pious King! [126]

The *Archæological Epistle*, which appeared nine years later, referred in its *Preface*, to the "numerous host of imitators." The first of these was a sort of reply, *A Familiar Epistle to the Author of the Heroic Epistle to Sir William Chambers*, London, 1774, ostensibly by Chambers, but sometimes attributed to Combe.[127] The *Monthly* thought that it gave the "Heroic Bard" a "sound drubbing." [128] *The Heroic Epistle to Lord C[raven]* (1775) and its answer (1776), both probably by Combe, also show Mason's influence. Indeed, Combe owed so much of his style to Mason that the *Monthly* in reviewing his *Diaboliad*, some years later, declared it a combination of "the force and rage of Churchill" with "the spirit and pleasantry" of the *Heroic Epistle*[129]; and his obvious imitations continued in 1777 and 1778, with his *Heroic Epistle to the Noble Author of the Duchess of Devonshire's Cow*, and his *Heroic Epistle to Sir James Wright*. Some imitators followed Mason's exotic vein. *An Heroic Epistle from Omiah to the Queen of Otaheite*, and *Kien Long, a Chinese Imperial Eclogue translated*, appeared in 1775. The *Critical* approved the style of the latter, but dared not approve the satire against the king[130]; and the *Monthly* declared it "a scramble in the warm over the *Heroic Epistle*." [131] The following year, Leonard McNally brought out in Dublin his *Heroic Epistle from Donna Teresa Pinnar y Ruiz, of Murcia, to Richard Twiss Esq. F.R.S.*[132]; and this was followed, in due course, by *An Heroic Answer*.[133] In 1778 came *The Injured Islanders or The Influence of Art upon the Happiness of Nature*; and two years later appeared *An Heroic Epistle from Hamet, the Moor Slipper Maker in London, to the*

[126] Walpole, *Last Journals*, I, 179.

[127] Hotten, *Combe*, xiii. For most of titles and ascriptions noted in this paragraph I have to thank the courtesy of Professor Robert Whitford of Knox College.

[128] *Mon. Rev.*, L, 317. See also *Crit. Rev.*, XXXVII, 313.

[129] *Mon. Rev.*, LVI, 155.

[130] *Crit. Rev.*, XXXIX, 160.

[131] *Mon. Rev.*, LII, 353.

[132] *Ibid.*, LVI, 312-313.

[133] *Ibid.*, LVI, 313.

Emperor of Morocco; and, in 1795, *An Imperial Epistle from Kien Long*, probably by Mathias. Many more epistles, "heroic," "elegiac," "familiar," and "satirical" saw the light in the 1780's and '90's, most of them more or less under Mason's influence.[134] There was *An Epistle to the Rev. Martin M–d–n*[135] — an Evangelical divine, whose treatise, *Thelyphthora*, in favor of polygamy so horrified Cowper; there were, an attack on Sheridan,[136] *An Heroic Epistle to Burke* (1791), *An Heroic Epistle to Priestley* (1791), and some others, like Mason's own later satires, upon literary and scientific subjects.[137]

None of Mason's later satires achieved such a success as the *Heroic Epistle*. The *Heroic Postscript* followed it the next year. Its verse shows the same decadence of style: there is less of trenchant concreteness, and the opening has a suggestion of archaism, a manner later developed by Mason in his *Archæological Epistle*. George III is the chief object of satire; the Scotch get their share of ridicule; Lord Bristol — under the name of Fannius[138] — receives his guerdon for calling the *Heroic Epistle* "blasphemy"; and Lord Liverpool,[139] whom Walpole disliked because he had the reversion of his sinecure in the Customs,[140] is sneeringly attacked. Mallet is included, as in the *Heroic Epistle*,[141] and there is a Pringle,[142] perhaps Sir John Pringle, Walpole's physician. Toward the end, we have some literary chatter and much generality on "hireling peers." The best touch is the description of the king's review of the fleet at Spithead:

> There should he see, as other folks have seen,
> That ships have anchors, and that seas are green,
> Should own the tackling trim, the streamers fine,
> With Sandwich prattle, and with Bradshaw dine,
> And then sail back, amid the cannon's roar,
> As safe, as sage, as when he left the shore.[143]

[134] So similar were they that the *Monthly*, LXVIII, 308, attributed them all to the "fruitful pen of the same bardling, a descendent, in direct line, from some bastard of Ovid's." Butler's *Heroical Epistle* from Hudibras to his lady, may also have been an influence.

[135] See *Mon. Rev.*, LXIV, 228-229.

[136] *An Heroic Epistle from Cunning Little Isaac, to the Modern Congreve*, London, 1781.

[137] One of these, *An Heroic Epistle to Mr. Winsor, the Patentee of the Hydrocarbonic Gas Lights*, dates as late as 1807.

[138] Line 63.

[139] Line 66.

[140] See *Quart. Rev.*, LXXXIX, 160; Walpole's *Memoirs of George III*, index, *sub* Jenkinson; Walpole *Letters*, Toynbee ed., VII, 397, n.

[141] *Sub nomine*, Marcellus, l. 74.

[142] Line 84.

[143] Line 43 *et seq.*

During 1774, the poem went through at least eight editions; and it raised considerable commotion, though not so much as the *Heroic Epistle*. After all, it is only a more obvious recapitulation of the same themes. Mason, in a letter to Walpole, gives some account of its success:

> . . . As there is certainly less comic humor in it than in the former, I should think neither its reputation nor its sale would be so great; but here I find from the last paper, Ministry steps in as usual, and by the voice of Col. Onslow stamps the reputation it might want upon it, and thereby enhances Almon's profit. Were it not for this, I'll be bound to say not three persons in York would have read it; now it will spread through the county.[144]

The *Gentleman's* praised the "*jeu d'esprit*," and declared that the "sprightly writer" possessed "the powers of poetry in a very eminent degree." [145] The *Monthly*, for all its usual severity, admitted that the "ingenious" author had "spirit and humor," but opined that his threat to "stretch on satire's rack" the Tory politicians of the day would be no more effective than "the old woman's counterblast to the thunder." [146] The *Critical* praised the *Postscript's* "harmony of numbers" and "delicacy of satire," and supposed it "a prelude to some greater work in contemplation." [147]

Three years later, in 1777, Almon brought out an *Ode to Mr. Pinchbeck*,[148] *upon his Newly Invented Patent Candle-Snuffers, By Malcolm M'Greggor, Esq.* Mason's use of the pseudonym has a satirical tinge. David Mallet — the same who had warbled *Truth at Court* in the *Heroic Epistle* — belonged, like the famous Rob Roy, to the clan of the Macgreggor, but they had "rendered themselves so notorious for acts of violence and robbery, that they were obliged by act of parliament to change their appellation." [149] There is an ironical preface hitting off this matter of the name. Then follow sixteen six-line stanzas celebrating the fame of "illustrious Pinchbeck." It soon appears that the snuffers are to be employed upon "the Candle of the State That burns a little

[144] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VI, 61, n.
[145] *Gent. Mag.*, XLIV, 85.
[146] *Mon. Rev.*, L, 154-155.
[147] *Crit. Rev.*, XXXVII, 313.
[148] Doubtless a reference to Christopher Pinchbeck, Jr., (1710—). See *D.N.B.*
[149] Churchill, *Works*, ed. 1804, I, 128, note to line 131, *Prophesy of Famine.*

blue." [150] There are the usual satirical allusions to Bute, North, Mansfield, and Sandwich.[151] "The hot Turmoil, That flames, on Boston's angry soil" is celebrated.[152] Lord Germaine is reminded of his disgrace at Minden[153]; and Dr. Tucker, Gloucester's "reverend Dean," [154] is not forgotten. Johnson, Shebbeare, and Macpherson[155] of Ossianic fame, are introduced, together with Sir John Dalrymple,[156] Walpole's pet aversion, author of the historical *Memoirs,* who lost his place in the Customs for taking bribes.[157] Putnam, Washington, and Lee receive appreciative mention at the end, and there is a satirical fling at Dr. Priestley for his *Experiments on Air.*[158] Indeed, Festus was right in calling satire "a kind of *olla* or hotch-potch." [159]

The Ode to Mr. Pinchbeck aroused but little comment, and indeed "could hardly hop beyond a third edition." [160] *Pro-Pinchbeck's Answer*[161] advised Mason "to trim the dim and glimmering taper" of his wit. The *Answer,* since it is directed against stark anonymity, has to resort to Rabelaisian humor. It puts Wilkes in the class with Wat Tyler and Jack Straw,[162] but attempts no real defense of the Ministry. Some of its fun seems rather ill-applied to Mason's satires; and I doubt whether Pro-Pinchbeck understood the allusion to Mallet under the name of Macgreggor. The *Gentleman's* reviewed the *Ode,* praised its whimsical allegory, listed the chief people satirized, and hinted that even the king was concerned.[163] Hannah More found "something of wit" in it, but thought it "by no means worthy of the author of the *Heroic Epistle.*" [164] Indeed, Mason's satiric candle did "burn a little blue." [165]

[150] Mason may have borrowed the figure of candle-snuffers from Robert Lloyd who used it to typify critics, *Works* of Lloyd, London, 1774, I, 132-134.

[151] Stanzas ii, v, and vi. The * in stanza vii, I have not been able to guess; but the reference is undoubtedly to the Quebec Act; Walpole *Letters,* Toynbee ed., IX, 13, 107, etc.

[152] Stanza ix.

[153] Stanza xi.

[154] Stanza xi.

[155] His *Secret History of Great Britain* roused the particular wrath of Walpole about this time. See Walpole *Letters,* Toynbee ed., IX, 66, 439, etc.

[156] Stanza xii.

[157] Walpole *Letters,* Toynbee ed., VIII, 244, 302.

[158] Stanza xv. See *Mon. Rev.,* LI, 136, 361, *et seq.;* and *Crit. Rev.,* XXXVII, 419.

[159] Dryden, *Works,* Scott-Saintsbury ed., XIII, 52.

[160] So says Mason in his *Epistle to Shebbeare,* l. 41. I know of but one edition.

[161] London, 1776.

[162] Stanza xiv.

[163] *Gent. Mag.,* XLVI, 371.

[164] Hannah More, *Memoirs,* I, 58.

[165] *Pro-Pinchbeck's Answer.*

The comparative failure of this effort did not discourage the joint authors. In 1777, Almon published *An Epistle to Dr. Shebbeare* and *An Ode to Sir Fletcher Norton*, signed as before by "Malcolm Macgreggor, author of the *Heroic Epistle to Sir William Chambers*." Of the two hundred odd verses to Dr. Shebbeare,[166] only a very small number have anything to do with him. Anstey is ridiculed for leaving his *Bath Guide* and lashing "unknown priests" and praising "well-known princes." [167] Dr. Priestley, Lord Shelburne, Lord North, Dr. Tucker, Archbishop Markham,[168] Lord Mansfield, and Lord Nugent are attacked. The hits are indiscriminately personal, literary, and political. The piece has little unity; and, although there are some fine antithetical verses such as, "Spite without spirit, malice without meaning," [169] the style on the whole, is rather diffuse, and lacks the quick succession of concrete points that characterized the *Heroic Epistle*. Perhaps the opening lines written against Johnson's *Taxation No Tyranny*, constitute the best passage.

> O for a thousand tongues! and every tongue
> Like Johnson's, arm'd with words of six feet long,
> In multitudinous vociferation
> To panegyricize this glorious nation,
> Whose liberty results from her taxation.
> O, for that passive, pensionary spirit,
> That by its prostitution proves its merit!
> That rests on RIGHT DIVINE all regal claims
> And gives to George, whate'er it gave to James:
> Then should my Tory numbers, old Shebbeare,
> Tickle the Tattered fragment of thy ear!

The *Ode to Sir Fletcher Norton* is written in imitation of Horace.[170] The meter is iambic tetrameter linked together by rhyme, usually in couplet. The versification is rough; the style, wordy; and the author has nothing new to say.[171] Both pieces were reviewed briefly in the *Monthly*. The *Epistle* is described

[166] For a short biography, see the *Europ. Mag.*, XIV, 244-245. See also Gray's note to Churchill's *Author*, l. 301, *Trans. of Roy. Soc. of Letters*, 1917-8, 175.

[167] Line 25.

[168] Line 107 is probably a reference to Mason's Tory metropolitan.

[169] Line 59.

[170] *Carmen VIII, Lib.* IV.

[171] The only new figure is Dr. K—, line 61, probably Keene, Bishop of Chester.

as "a keen, acute, spirited satire on court connections, in which poor old Shebbeare comes in for '—stripes he was not formed to feel.'" The *Ode*, says the *Monthly*, is "easy and familiar, but there is not much in it." [172]

The Archæological Epistle to Jeremiah Milles, Dean of Exeter, President of the Royal Society of Antiquaries, came out early[173] in 1782. It is almost purely a literary satire and aims its ridicule against the Dean's solemn edition of Chatterton's "Thomas Rowley," with a glossary and notes.[174] There is a long *Preface* which holds forth on the archæological way of writing, and even undertakes the "*transmutation*" of selections of Milton and of Shakespeare into this new style. The poem itself consists of twenty-one six-line stanzas, the first fourteen of which are archæologically written, with a glossary at the bottom of each page "extracted from that of the learned Dean." There are references to Lord North, to Tyrwhitt for his *Chaucer*, and to Johnson for his attack on Gray.[175] The *Monthly* ridiculed Dean Milles, and gave a long review of the satire with much quotation.[176] The *New Annual* was enthusiastic, and declared the author "one of our ablest men in respect of genius and of wit." [177] But most interesting perhaps is the "pleasant story" that Mason detailed to Walpole:

> . . . Dr. Johnson . . . read the Poem before the Preface, and thinking all that was said there was ironical, pronounced it to be superexcellent; on reading the Preface afterwards, he gravely said, "I find the author is no friend of mine; nevertheless, I cannot gainsay his poetical talents." [178]

In *The Dean and the 'Squire*, published later in the same year, Mason satirized Soame Jenyns' *Disquisition on Government*, under

[172] *Mon. Rev.*, LVII, 488.

[173] Probably in March or April, for on May 15, Mason wrote Harcourt asking whether Macgreggor kept up "his usual fun"; and Mason could hardly do so until after the satire's appearance (*Harcourt Papers*, VII, 74).

[174] This and the following satire were composed, still under at least some Walpolean influence. See Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., II, 195-196. His treatment of Chatterton had been severely criticized. The *Epistle* mentions him, stanzas xi and xii, and attempts a sort of exoneration. Walpole thought Dean Milles "a fool"; Walpole *Letters*, Toynbee ed., IX, 331.

[175] The *Preface* also sneered at Johnson for being a "writer in the trade."

[176] *Mon. Rev.*, LXVI, 294-298.

[177] Nichols, *Lit. Anec.* (1815), 2nd series, IX, 685.

[178] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VIII, 192, n.

the pretense of poeticizing it.[179] The *Dedication* makes his attitude plain. It ends with a list of good wishes, that Jenyns "may long remain on the illustrious List of Pensioners," and that "having changed from Tory to Whig in the Ministry of the Duke of Newcastle, from Whig to Tory under those, or rather *that* of Lords Bute and North," he may accomplish another successful metamorphosis with the return of a Whig government. The *Eclogue* itself is an imaginary dialogue between Jenyns and Dr. Tucker,[180] in which both seek to disparage the principles set forth by Locke and championed by Rousseau, that all men were created free and equal and that government exists by contract and consent of the governed. The fun is rather heavy, and the satire not very keen. Mason could, on occasion, fling a telling epigram at a political or literary opponent; but he was incapable of defending or assailing a whole system of thought. The *Gentleman's* gave a long quotation.[181] The *Monthly* found the piece written with the "usual humor and pleasantry of this Author," and quoted at length.[182] The *Critical* said it had "much original merit, ease of numbers and poignancy of satire." [183]

The last of the Macgreggor satires were those published in 1782; but Mason probably continued to write, if not to publish. In fact, several things that he had done even before that date, never came out in pamphlet form. From the *Public Advertiser*, Walpole quotes *The Old Woman of Syracuse A Scrap of Ancient History*,[184] eight quatrains of sing-song without very much point. On the acquittal of Keppel in February, 1779, Mason was inspired to an *Epigram*,[185] and, a few days later, he composed another *Epigram* against the "courtly heroes who so boldly vote To cut America's collective throat." [186] The pieces are of little value;

[179] The form seems to have been borrowed from Jenyns' own *Eclogue of the 'Squire and the Parson*, written on the occasion of Lord Bute's "*glorious* Peace." *Gent. Mag.*, LII, 339.

[180] Tucker's *Humble Address* seems to have received a better answer from Samuel Estwick. See *Mon. Rev.*, LV, 477 *et seq.* The phrase "virtual representation" was a rallying cry down into the days of Peacock and the Reform Bills of the 1830's. For an exposition of Dean Tucker's Tory politics in brief compass, see *Gent. Mag.*, LIV, Part 1, 202. He put the King above Lords and Commons, and said that neither had a right to nominate his ministers.

[181] *Gent. Mag.*, LII, 339.

[182] *Mon. Rev.*, LXVII, 309-311.

[183] *Crit. Rev.*, LIII, 392-393.

[184] *Last Journals*, II, 193-194. Walpole says it is "for the *Public Advertiser*."

[185] *Ibid.*, II, 249.

[186] *Ibid.*, II, 252.

and one can readily believe with Mitford that Mason's long manuscript poem *The Duchess and the 'Squire: a Political Eclogue* on reform in Parliament, is not worth printing.[187] *King Stephen and his Courtier*[188] was probably composed early in 1780.[189] The courtier in question was the famous Smelt, sub-governor to the Prince of Wales, to whom the king gave a watch. Smelt refused to have it re-set, even though in a month's time it was four hours wrong; for the king had given it to him set and running: therefore, of course, it could not be wrong.[190]

As Mason's relations with Walpole grew strained, he stopped writing satire. His news from town was no longer "so regular or so detailed." Harcourt had turned Tory; and no other confidant was in evidence. Vainly Anna Seward, in 1783, exclaimed against Johnson, and wondered why Mason suffered "this Fe Fa Fum of literature . . . to peer and gallop unmolested over the fields of criticism." [191] Mason had laid down the satiric pen.

The question has been raised of Mason's authorship of Junius. Dilke discussed the matter in reviewing Mitford's edition of the Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*,[192] but decided that if Mason and Walpole had collaborated on Junius, they would hardly have attacked Walpole's friend, Conway. The question was raised again more recently by F. S.A.[193]; but Crossley's answer[194] seems fairly convincing. Malone, who knew Mason's authorship of the *Heroic Epistle*, suspected Burke or Dyer of being Junius[195]; and knowing Mason's hand in one case, he could probably have suspected it in the other. After all, Mason and Junius had in common only such things as most Whigs of the period held in common; and I cannot imagine his writing Junius, without some trace of evidence remaining in his voluminous correspondence.

In 1801, *The School for Satire* reprinted the *Heroic Epistle*, the *Heroic Postscript*, the *Epistle to Dr. Shebbeare*, and the *Archæological Epistle*; and in 1805, Almon edited the *Works* of Mac-

[187] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., I, xiii.

[188] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 63 *et seq.* This poem was published anonymously in 1782 under the title of *King Stephen's Watch*. See *Gent. Mag.*, LII, 198-199.

[189] The reference may be to this in Walpole *Letters*, Toynbee ed., XI, 107.

[190] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 63 *et seq.*

[191] Anna Seward, *Letters*, II, 68.

[192] *London Athen.*, May 17, 1851, 521.

[193] *N. and Q.*, 1st Ser., III, 409. See also Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, I, xxii.

[194] *Ibid.*, III, 432.

[195] Clayden, II, 33.

greggor, from which he omitted the *Archæological Epistle*, as spurious. The *Monthly* reviewed Almon's collection and declared it "generally acceptable," [196] but Mason's satire had had its day. Its strictures on current politics undoubtedly had reason. If the attacks upon Johnson were not justified, those on Macpherson and "Rowley" were; and the ridicule of Chambers and of Dean Milles was quite deserved. Mason's satires met an occasional situation, met it rather well, and, with its passing, passed into political and literary history.

They show a closer relationship to his own life and to really vital history than do most of his works, his lacrymose odes and his hybrid tragedies. They have, therefore, a larger degree of telling, concrete detail and vivid reality than usually appears in Mason. Perhaps this is to be accounted for by the personal animus that inspired them, perhaps by the fact that their Neo-classical character was a true outgrowth of the author's subconscious mind — which, as shown in his biography, must also have been predominantly Neo-classical. The most probable explanation, however, is that we owe this sting of direct allusion to Walpole who supplied the gossip on which it is based. This would explain why the first satire, in which Walpole took the largest hand, is the most concrete, and therefore the most successful, and why the satires ceased, with the growing coldness between the two men. In any case, the *Heroic Epistle* forms rather spicy reading even to-day, for anyone who will take the trouble to understand it: it is a telling commentary on the politics of the age and a not unworthy example of late Neo-classical satire.

[196] *Mon. Rev.*, n. s., XLVIII, 105. (1805).

CHAPTER XII

MASON'S PROSE WORKS

MASON'S prose works comprise a rather heterogeneous mass of biographies, sermons, miscellaneous essays, and letters, all of very uneven value. He wrote two biographies: the first one, *Memoirs of Gray*, written in the '70's, is of considerable importance; the second, *Memoirs of Whitehead*, written in the '80's, is a minor work. The pamphlets include *Anecdotes of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, *Essays on English Church Music*,[1] *Animadversions on York Lunatic Asylum*, and *An Occasional Discourse on the African Slave Trade*. Sixteen of Mason's *Sermons* are printed in his *Works*, together with *A Conjectural Essay* on the word Angel, and *An Examination of the Prophesy, Contained in the 24th Chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel*; and a large number of Mason's letters appear among those of Gray, of Walpole, and of Harcourt, and in biographies and miscellanies dealing with the period.[2]

To separate, in all these works, the Neo-classical and the Romantic elements is a large and not always profitable task; but, in the case of the biographies, the distinction is not without significance. In reviewing Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, in 1838, Carlyle inveighed against the "vacuum biographies" that prevailed in the Neo-classical period, and ridiculed English life-writing as "delicate" and "decent" — "bless its mealy mouth!" Bishop Sprat's *Life of Cowley* is perhaps a fair instance of this sort. Johnson truly termed it "a funeral oration rather than a history"[3]; for, although Sprat had, as he says, Cowley's private papers and many letters, yet he preferred to set down a fustian panegyric rather than a coherent series of events or the portrait of a personality. The Neo-classical sense of decorum dictated that a man should live his life in the grand manner, and, after his death, appear before the world, if he appeared at all, as an example of virtue.

[1] These two will be taken up in the chapter on Mason's music and painting.

[2] Several other very doubtful prose works are noted in Bibl. A.

[3] *D.N.B.*, *sub* Sprat.

Cowley doubtless had this in his mind when he requested Sprat to "*be sure to let nothing pass* [into print], *that might seem the least Offence to Religion or Good Manners*"[4]; and Sprat, in turn, took it for granted that, in the generality of cases, the "correction" of one's friends is necessary and desirable. One understands why Rousseau's *Confessions* were so particularly shocking to the eighteenth century: in fact, intellectual frankness was put in the same class as physical nudity; and the *Cowley* is perhaps the characteristic biography of the period.[5] About the middle of the century, however, beginning with Johnson's *Savage* and the works of that veteran biographer Thomas Birch,[6] a more realistic impulse and an interest in vivid personality appear,[7] and slowly develop with the rise of the biographical *genre*.[8]

Mason, in attempting his *Memoirs of Gray*, took Sprat's work as an example to be avoided.[9] He had all the advantages of the latter; and he made far greater use of them — so much so, as to be hailed as the inventor of "a new species of biography," [10] a book, fresh, vivid, concrete, and with a Romantic stress on Gray's personality. The two men had been friends for over twenty-four years; and the merest glance at their extensive correspondence demonstrates their intimacy. Gray, to be sure, treated him flip-

[4] Cowley, *Works*, London, 1710, *Life of Cowley*, ii. The italics are in the original.

[5] Most English biographies of the seventeenth and the early eighteenth centuries were written either in the tradition of Suetonius, as appendices to history, or in the tradition of Plutarch and the Mediæval saints' lives, as moral or spiritual *exempla*.

[6] E.g., Birch, *Heads of Illustrious Persons of Great Britain with their Lives and Characters*, London, 1752. See *Mon. Rev.*, VII, 255.

[7] The old ethical impulse also remained (*Crit. Rev.*, XXI, 212; and XXXII, 30 *et seq.*); but the new desire for interesting detail sprang up beside it. The *Monthly* declared that biography was intended for "entertainment" as well as "instruction," and attributed to the biographers of the day the vices of "flattery" and "invective." (*Mon. Rev.*, XIX, 64 and 73. Cf. *Crit. Rev.*, XXX, 45.) This increase of realism seems to have arisen from the example of the contemporary novel. See W. L. Cross, *The English Novel*, New York, 1908, 22 *et seq.* and W. H. Dunn, *English Biography*, London, 1916, 106. Autobiography and confession-literature may also have played a part. See W. R. Thayer, *The Art of Biography*, New York, 1920, 83 *et seq.* Cf. Anna Robeson Burr, *The Autobiography*, Boston, 1909, Chapter IX.

[8] The eighteenth century marks the great rise in biography. In the fifty years after his death, no life of Dryden appeared. (I omit the poor attempt by "Charles Wilson.") Five lives of Pope appeared in the twenty-five years after his death; and the seven years following Johnson's death produced seven biographies. By 1790, moreover, the *Monthly* found it necessary to devote an entire section of its reviews to biography.

[9] *Memoirs of Gray*, ed. York, 1775, 4, n.

[10] *Crit. Rev.*, XXXIX, 378 and 460.

pantly at times; but, as Walpole said, Gray was not an "agreeable" correspondent[11]; and, indeed, he was "apt to be too satirical." [12] Gray nicknamed Mason "Scroodles"; but Gray nicknamed everybody from "Fobus" [13] whom he disliked, to "Old Pa" [14] and "Gaskyn" [15] whom he loved.[16] Gray, to be sure, criticized Mason's work and added minute emendations; but he criticized Walpole's *Anecdotes* also,[17] and Beattie's *Minstrel*[18]; and one must not forget that Gray submitted *The Bard* to Mason.[19] I cannot see in these things anything necessarily disparaging to Mason, but merely further proof of the intimacy between the two men.

The letters are full of the most obvious and unequivocal proof of Gray's attachment for Mason lasting through two full decades, and, indeed, Mason was the superior of the two socially. In the spring of 1756, Gray was thinking of a tour through Switzerland, and asked Mason to accompany him[20] — a real compliment in view of the unfortunate *finale* of the previous tour with Walpole! He even suggested that they hire a house and live there together. There is a ring of more than formal meaning in many expressions of esteem that Gray wrote to Mason and wrote of him to others. On April 23, 1757, he ended his letter: "Adieu, my best Mason; I am pleased to think how much I am obliged to you, and that, while I live, I must be ever yours" [21]; and again: "Adieu, dear Mason, and believe me most truly yours." [22] Shortly after, he wrote to Warton of "our best Mason." [23] In a letter to Mason dated January 3, 1758, he had been referring to the help and sympathy one friend can give another, and said: "I am sensible I cannot return to you so much of this assistance as I have received

[11] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., I, 19.

[12] Gray, *Works*, Child ed., li. The remark is Cole's.

[13] The Duke of Newcastle, Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 287-288, etc.

[14] Palgrave, *ibid.*, II, 49, 54.

[15] Gaskarth, *ibid.*, I, 312.

[16] Robinson was addressed as "Dear (Reverend) Billy . . . the travelled Mr. Robinson, with a thousand airs and graces, so much *virtù*, so much *sçavoir-vivre!* the husband, the father, the rich clergyman, warm, snug, and contented as a bishop . . . ." (*Ibid.*, III, 28.) Norton Nicholls was called "a green gosling." (*Ibid.*, III, 109.) What appellation the official Stonehewer received, I do not know; but it must have been an address couched in some such style as the preceding that "tiffed" him so much that he was "backward in answering it." (*Ibid.*, III, 313.) Mitford lists even more in his *Preface* to the Gray-Mason *Correspondence*, xv.

[17] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 325.

[18] *Ibid.*, III, 305 *et seq.*

[19] *Ibid.*, I, 333.

[20] *Ibid.*, I, 300 *et seq.*

[21] *Ibid.*, I, 331.

[22] *Ibid.*, I, 333.

[23] *Ibid.*, I, 354.

from you."[24] And ten days later: "Adieu, dear Mason, and remember me; and remember too that I have neither company, nor pleasure, nor spirits here, and that a letter from you stands in place of all these. Adieu."[25] Shortly after, he sent Warton a beautiful note of condolence on the death of Warton's son — and Warton was one of Gray's most intimate friends — but Gray said he could not come to town to see the bereaved family because he hoped shortly to see Mason, and was "unwilling to miss him"[26]; and a letter from Mason was looked forward to again[27] and yet again.[28] Later, Gray wrote to Warton (who is said not to have cared for Mason) and referred to "my most entire good opinion and most unalterable respect as well as kindness for Mason."[29] In the fall of 1758, Gray was anxiously inquiring for news of Mason[30]; and, during the winter, Gray seems to have visited him at Aston[31] — a journey of no mean discomfort and even danger, especially if the Trent happened to be in flood.

During the sixties, the relation is the same. Mason was privy to Gray's real opinion of his Cambridge neighbors, and, in the summer of 1760, made a seal of the university with "old Fobus," Duke of Newcastle and Chancellor of the university, caricatured according to Gray's favorite designation of him, as an owl. Gray was delighted, and suggests that it be done in bas-relief "on the pedestal of George the Second, which his Grace proposes soon to erect in the Theatre."[32] Mason paid the insurance on Gray's house for him, and subscribed for him and for Pembroke College to "Stuart's book of Attica."[33] In '65, Gray visited Mason at York[34]; and, finding him engaged with Shakespeare,[35] wrote a delicious squib, *William Shakespeare to Mrs. Anne, Regular Servant to the Rev. Mr. Precentor, of York.*[36] Mason laughingly accused Gray of wanting somebody to "frump and scold and say sharp things to."[37] Again in June, 1767, Gray planned a trip north. The following February, Walpole found Gray "close

[24] Gray *Letters,* Tovey ed., II, 2.
[25] *Ibid.,* II, 14.
[26] *Ibid.,* II, 30.
[27] *Ibid.,* II, 32.
[28] *Ibid.,* II, 35.
[29] *Ibid.,* II, 47.
[30] *Ibid.,* II, 54 and 55.
[31] *Ibid.,* II, 57.
[32] *Ibid.,* II, 160.
[33] *Ibid.,* III, 9-10. This was one of the most noted contributions of the age to Hellenic scholarship.
[34] *Ibid.,* III, 74, 76.
[35] *Ibid.,* III, 78.
[36] *Ibid.,* III, 76-77.
[37] *Ibid.,* III, 79.

with Mason"[38]: they may have been cogitating some literary venture such as the history of English poetry. Gray seems to have spent most of May and June of 1770 at Mason's rectory at Aston[39]; and when he died the following year, Mason was found to be his executor.[40] There is no room to doubt that Gray had Mason in his very best opinion, and that Mason had knowledge of Gray's most private affairs.[41]

Mason, beside his personal knowledge, had a wealth of documentary material. All of Gray's private papers were left him "to preserve or destroy" at his own discretion.[42] He had, moreover, in his possession, a large mass of Gray's correspondence: for, since Mason's leaving Cambridge early in the '50's, the friendship had been largely epistolary.[43] Walpole, Warton, Beattie, Palgrave, Nicholls, and others had supplied their letters also. Temple's anonymous eulogy was quoted from *The London Magazine*[44]; and Boswell wrote Mason "a very Scotch letter," [45] divulging its authorship; and Mason, who disliked the "bear-leader," returned a very "dry and ill-humored" answer.[46] Robinson refused to send Mason the Gray letters in his possession — perhaps because he "did not consider Mr. Mason as equal to the task," [47] but more probably because he preferred not to see himself addressed in print as "Dear (Reverend) Billy." Bonstetten also seems to have declined.[48] But Mason had enough material without their contributions.

The work started under highly favorable auspices. Mason had been Gray's intimate friend; he had ample documentary material; he had literary training; and he was sentimentalist enough to be

[38] *Correspondence of Gray, etc.*, Toynbee ed., II, 273.

[39] Gray-Nicholls *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., 109-111.

[40] Gray, *Works*, Child ed., xciv.

[41] I know of only one matter concerning which Mason was misinformed. Gray did not "let the booksellers have his MSS. *gratis*," (Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, I, 15) as Mason says. He sold the right to certain poems (saving one final edition, which proved to be the one by Mason) to Dodsley for £40. See MSS. letters of Mitford *et al.* in the Treasure Room of Harvard University Library.

[42] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, I, 11. See also Chapter V.

[43] At his death Mason left this material to Stonehewer, who in turn left it to Pembroke Hall, Cambridge. Mathias, *Observations*, 5-6.

[44] Gray, *Works*, ed. 1775, 402 *et seq.* and *London Mag.*, Mar., 1772, XLI, 140.

[45] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VI, 229-230, n.

[46] Seccombe's *Letters of Boswell*, takes up the whole matter, 140-141, 167.

[47] Gray, *Works*, Child ed., Boston, 1866, ciii.

[48] Letters of Frederick Matthisson, ed. Anne Plumtre, 207. The MS. correspondence of Mitford and Dyce, in Harvard Treasure Room, gives some interesting notes on the Gray-Bonstetten letters.

a connoisseur of the emotions and an intimate recorder of personality: not without reason, Beattie wrote to Williamson: "The admirers of Mr. Gray will be happy to think that he has made choice of such an able executor as Mr. Mason." [49] Walpole, moreover, offered his press, and declared himself "happy to bear all the expense" [50]; but Mason decided to print the poems himself and use the income for charity.[51] In 1772, the advertisement appeared of *The Life of Thomas Gray Esq.*[52] preparing for the press; but, the year following, Mason was still "up to the ears in *Gray's Life*" [53]; and so the work went on to final publication in 1775.

Mason made very much fuller use of his wealth of material than Sprat had done with Cowley's papers. He perceived that expression of personality is the object of biography, and aimed to develop "such topics as characterize the man and distinguish the peculiar part which he acted in the varied Drama of Society." [54] As Sir Sidney Lee puts it, "character and exploits are for biographical purposes inseparable. . . . The exploit may range from mere talk . . . to empire-building." [55] In Gray's case, it was "mere talk," and this "mere talk" was best preserved in his letters. Thus Mason's labor resolved itself largely into the printing of Gray's letters with necessary selection and editing, and with an introduction on his early life supplied largely by Walpole; and it is the triumphant use of this method that makes Mason's work a mile-stone in the progress of biography.

Mason, however, was not the first biographer to make at least some attempt at this solution of the problem. Mitford[56] suggests that Quirini's *Epistolæ Reginaldi Poli*[57] gave Mason the hint for

[49] Forbes, *Life of Beattie*, 149.

[50] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., V, 335.

[51] *Ibid.*, V, 336-338, n.

[52] At the end of *The Eng. Garden*, Book I, second edition.

[53] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VI, 25. One cannot but be amused at Dobson's statement that Mason chose the epistolary method of biography because of his "indolence." *Nat. Rev.*, LIX, 293.

[54] *Life of Gray*, ed. 1775, 2. This dictum expresses the same idea as Carlyle's famous definition of biography at the beginning of his essay on *Burns*.

[55] Lee, *Princ. of Biog.*, Camb., 1911, 8, 9, etc.

[56] Aldine ed. of Gray, London, 1866, iv. This method does not seem to have been the entire invention of Middleton. See Samuel Knight, *Life of Colet*, London, 1724; and *Life of Erasmus*, Cambridge [1726].

[57] Cardinal Quirini, *Epistolæ Reginaldi Poli*, Brescia, 1744-57. M. Haile, *Life of Reginald Pole*, New York, 1910, v-vii, gives a brief discussion of these and other works on Pole.

his method; but, in themselves, these letters did not constitute a biography; and Phillips, furthermore, as he says in the preface to his *Life*, used the letters only for "plain matters of fact," [58] rather than for the expression of Pole's personality. A more probable source is Conyers Middleton's *Life of Cicero*.[59] This book was a great classic in its time.[60] Gray advised Mr. Chute and Sir Horace Mann to read it[61]; and counted the author "an old Acquaintance." [62] Mason undoubtedly knew it, and had probably met Middleton at Cambridge. In writing the *Cicero*, Middleton had feared partiality; and consequently he determined "to leave the facts to speak for themselves," [63] and to insert letters as far as possible into the body of the work. The result was at times a fragmentary but, on the whole, a masterly book.[64] Mason, however, used this method, not so much from a love of impartiality as from a desire for the greatest possible vividness and reality; for Gray's letters have all the *verve* and movement that is so notably lacking in his life. Mason wished to "characterize the man," to show Gray as "a Scholar and a Poet." [65]

The old Neo-classical ideal of panegyric was not, however, altogether lacking. At all events, Mason wished his friend to appear in the best possible light. Walpole was in full agreement; and, on May 9, 1772, he wrote Mason that some of Gray's letters are "certainly not proper for present publication: but," he continues, "I shall leave these and the rest behind me, and none of them will disgrace him; which ought to be our care since it was so very much his own." [66] Mason, moreover, was not, strictly speaking, editing

[58] T. Phillips, S. J., *Life of Pole*, Oxford, 1764. This book raised a storm of religious controversy. See *Crit. Rev.*, XXI, 269. Neve and Pye both wrote answers. See Haile, vi.

[59] *The Character and Conduct of Cicero, Considered from the History of his Life*, by the Rev. Dr. Middleton, London, 1742 (3d ed.).

[60] See Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 160, n, and I, 163, notes.

[61] *Ibid.*, I, 115.

[62] *Ibid.*, I, 206. This was at the time of Middleton's death in 1750.

[63] Middleton, *Cicero*, ed. 1742, xv *et seq.*

[64] Birch fragmentarily used this method in his numerous biographies; and, in his *Historical View of Negotiations between England, France, and Brussels, 1592-1617*, he says that letters and papers are the "only true and unerring sources of history." (*Mon. Rev.*, II, 179, reviews this opinion favorably.) A *Memoir*, moreover, was prefixed to the second edition of *The Letters of John Hughes (Crit. Rev.*, XXXVII, 11 *et seq.)*; but this is not quite the same as creating a life out of letters. Mason has been credited with his full share of originality (and possibly more). See Gosse, *The Custom of Biography, Anglo-Saxon Rev.*, VIII, 202.

[65] Gray, *Works*, Mason ed., 1775, 2.

[66] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., V, 385. See also *Ibid.*, 409.

Gray's letters, but merely inserting "specimens" [67] in the biography. He was writing very shortly after Gray's death; many of those mentioned were still alive; and, in some cases at least, Mason felt that a judicious omission of names, if not of whole passages, was due them. There were some letters and parts of letters that seemed to him of little interest to the public. There were occasions when Gray seemed to fall short in the niceties of decorum; and Mason thought it necessary to supply polite flourishes, to change *don'ts* and *shan'ts*, to fill out abbreviations, and to correct punctuation. In short, he "altered dates, transferred passages from one letter to another, combined together letters of widely different dates, 'improved' the grammar and diction, and even went so far as to insert matter of his own." [68]

Of course, the more recent editors of Gray's letters have attacked Mason bitterly. Mrs. Toynbee says: "Of Mason's editorial methods it is difficult to speak with moderation." [69] Tovey charges Mason with catering to his own vanity in his changes, and says that he "dressed this correspondence to suit his dignity before giving it to the world." [70] Gosse speaks of the "boundless nature of his [Mason's] duplicity as an editor." [71] Mitford, however, largely justified Mason because of the literary customs of his day[72]; and Mathias, still earlier, declared that Mason was "at full liberty" to adopt any disposition of the material he saw fit.[73]

Mason seems to have had some sense that his action was not altogether for the best[74]; but it was quite the usual way of treat-

[67] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., V, 479-480.

[68] *Correspondence of Gray, etc.*, Toynbee ed.; Toynbee, I, x, note 7, gives a list of some of the most garbled letters.

[69] *Correspondence of Gray, etc.*, Toynbee ed., I, x.

[70] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 235-236, n. Tovey discusses this matter at length in his *Preface*, II, xiii *et seq.* I am not convinced that his charges are to be taken seriously. Mason incorporated both of Gray's not-over-flattering judgments of himself (Mason, *Gray*, 190 and 207; also *Tovey*, I, 178 and 202); and, as for the leaving out of Gray's corrections of Mason, that seems to have been prompted by a desire not to bore the reader with purely scholarly matters. If Mason's vanity had kept him from publishing them at the time, he would doubtless have destroyed these letters (for they were most of them written to himself) rather than leave them behind him, as he says, for possible publication.

[71] Gray, *Works*, Gosse ed., London, 1884, I, xi. In view of some of Gosse's own work, his *Donne*, for instance, he might better have been silent.

[72] Gray-Nicholls *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., viii; and Gray-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., xi *et seq.* Mitford himself has been severely charged with inaccuracy and partiality (*Quart. Rev.*, LXXXIX, 135 *et seq.*).

[73] Mathias, *Observations*, 9.

[74] On Jan. 31, 1775, he writes Nicholls: "Mr. Mason returns many thanks to Mr. Nicholls for the use he has per-

ing letters and private papers during the period. Cowley certainly expected Sprat, if he used correspondence at all, to edit it severely.[75] Pope's garbling of his own letters is well known. Congreve seems to have written his own life under a pseudonym, and the "letters" it contains were doubtless composed for the occasion.[76] The correspondence in Bolingbroke's *Memoirs* was doubtless composed in like fashion — perhaps not even by himself.[77] Lady Mary Montagu's correspondence was fully revised before publication.[78] Cowper disapproved of printing letters and gave Lady Hesketh a grudging consent to the publication of his own, only on condition that she give them "a complete revisal, erasing all that critics in such matters would condemn," [79] and Miss Berry, in editing Walpole's letters, "though she seldom tampered with the actual text, frequently suppressed passages, sometimes of considerable length and importance, without any indication of the fact.[80] Doubtless the Neo-classical sense of decorum and the feeling that biography existed to point a moral rather than tell the literal tale, had something to do with these editings; and they are analogous to Percy's treatment of his famous ballad manuscript and to the cavalier treatment of quotations by Defoe and his generation. Even Wordsworth, as late as 1816, declared: "Truth is not here [in biography], as in the sciences and in natural philosophy, to be sought without scruple, and promulgated for its own sake, upon the mere chance of its being serviceable; but for obviously justifying purposes, moral or intellectual. Silence is a privilege of the grave"; and he goes on to apply this dictum particularly to "the biography of authors." [81] Even more recently, Disraeli felt

mitted him to make of these letters [of Gray to Nicholls]. He will find that much liberty has been taken in transposing parts of them, &c. for the press, and will see the reason for it; it were however to be wished that the originals be so disposed of as not to impeach the Editor's fidelity, but this he leaves to Mr. Nicholls's discretion, for people of common sense will think the liberty he has used very venial." Gray-Nicholls *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., 163-164.

[75] Cowley, *Works*, London, 1710, ii.

[76] Charles Wilson, *Life of Congreve*, London, 1730. "Charles Wilson" is certainly a *nom de guerre*, perhaps for Congreve himself, possibly for John Oldmixon (1673-1742).

[77] *Memoirs of Bolingbroke*, London, 1752.

[78] *Camb. Hist.*, IX, 244.

[79] William Cowper, *Letters*, London, 1904, II, 423-424. In America also the practice was common, e.g., Franklin's *Autobiography*, Sparks' doctoring of Washington's letters, and Kennedy's of Wirt's letters. (See W. P. Trent, *English Culture in Virginia, Johns Hopkins Studies in History*, VII, v-vi, 29, n.)

[80] See *Correspondence of Gray, etc.*, Toynbee's *Preface*, I, x.

[81] Knight, *Prose Writings of Wordsworth*, 97-98.

called upon to defend the propriety of publishing letters at all — and pointed to Mason's *Memoirs of Gray* as a triumphant example.[82] It is hard to justify Mason's insertions, however innocuous they may have been. But eighteenth-century scholarship was negligent of such matters; and one modern critic of note prefers Mason's works, for the general reader at least, to the scholarly edition of Tovey! [82a]

Mason's own day did not censure him because he gave the world so little of Gray's personality and opinions; but rather because he gave so much. Bishop Keene, to whom Gray sometimes referred rather flippantly, expressed "high displeasure"[83]; the historian Robertson did not "relish" the *Memoirs*,[84] probably for a like reason[85]; and Hume's editor "grossly abused" Mason for printing Gray's disapproval of that famous Deist.[86] Some of the objections, however, arose, not from prejudice, but from a sincere feeling that Mason had over-stepped the bounds of propriety. Stockdale attacked Mason vigorously because he had sacrilegiously "published and sold" Gray's portrait and because he had printed "the careless and trifling letters, which he [Gray] had written to the pedantic and imitative Sophs of his university." [87] Had Mason published the letters as they stood, how much more would Stockdale have been horrified. The *Gentleman's* felt that Mason should have deleted Gray's satire against Dr. Waterland[88]; and "Vindex" thought that the criticism of Spence's *Polymetis*, "a work of established merit," should also have been omitted.[89] Preston objected to Mason's note against irregular odes.[90] Cradock and Hurd thought that Mason should have suppressed the satires against Cambridge dons, and the other "vulgarisms." [91] Perhaps it was this matter that caused the "interregnum" of the Mason-Hurd friendship in the 1770's.[92] Walpole, on the other hand, declared

[82] Disraeli, *Calamities and Quarrels of Authors*, ed. 1871, I, 57.

[82a] More, P. E., *With the Wits*, 253 *et seq.*

[83] Gray-Nicholls *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., 185.

[84] Boswell, *Letters to Temple*, London, 1908, 200.

[85] Gray, *Works*, ed. 1775, 310; and Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 83.

[86] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VII, 67.

[87] Stockdale, 115.

[88] *Gent. Mag.*, XLV, 290.

[89] *Ibid.*, XLV, 523.

[90] A note on Gray's seventh ode; but the *Monthly* agreed with Mason, LXXXI, 48.

[91] See Kilvert, *Hurd*, 362; and Cradock, *Memoirs*, 182-184.

[92] The two were on good terms in 1775 (Nichols, *Lit. Anecd.*, VI, 488); for Mason addressed his new edition of *Caractacus* to Hurd on the occasion of Hurd's becoming Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry. If Mason's freedom in printing Gray's letters was the cause of

that Mason had made "a very judicious selection"[93]; Dr. Parr gave Mason "high commendation" for endeavoring only "to *extenuate* the singularities" of Gray, rather than suppressing them altogether[94]; and in his *Life of Goldsmith*, Forster actually prefers the literary flavor of one letter in Mason's version to the original by Gray![95] There can be no doubt that those of Mason's contemporaries who disapproved the work, did so, not because it gave them too little of Gray's own words and opinions, but because it gave them too much.

The Poems of Mr. Gray to which are prefixed Memoirs of his Life and Writings by W. Mason, M.A., appeared in 1775; and, in spite of all its detractors, and in spite of the tense interest in the American crisis,[96] the magazines discussed it considerably. At the mere announcement, in 1772, the *Gentleman's* had looked forward to the work "with pleasure"[97]; and when the life finally came out, there was a long review,[98] with some criticism, to be sure, of Mason's publishing papers "never destined for the press," but also a very large share of commendation. *The London Magazine* printed a four-page eulogy[99] by Boswell; and, in its own review, declared that Mason appeared "as a man of taste and a friend indeed."[100] Most of the critics concurred with *The London Review* that the posthumous pieces added "little lustre" to Gray's reputation.[101] The *Monthly* discussed the book in three long installments. It commented favorably on Mason's method, but significantly added: ". . . though the pencil of friendship has thrown much into shade, at the same time that we see the great genius, we see a man of singularities too violent for the commerce of society."[102] The eighteenth century did not understand Gray's

the quarrel, it probably took place before then; for Mason consulted, or at least planned to consult, Hurd early in the '70's as to what letters should be printed (Forbes, *Beattie and his Friends*, 63). Of all the Gray-Hurd correspondence, which was probably rather considerable, Mason used only one letter, No. 26.

[93] *Correspondence of Gray, etc.*, Toynbee ed., I, xxxiii.

[94] Parr, 16-17, n.

[95] Forster, II, 109-110, n.

[96] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VI, 120. Walpole feared that politics might draw attention away from the *Memoirs*.

[97] *Gent. Mag.*, XLII, 80.

[98] *Ibid.*, XLV, 285. There are 5 pages of detailed summary, and four of Gray's poems.

[99] *London Mag.*, XLIV, 215 *et seq.* For proof of Boswell's authorship, see Norton Nicholls, 164.

[100] *London Mag.*, XLIV, 253.

[101] *London Review*, I, 406, 477. For this reference, I am obliged to the courtesy of Professor R. S. Crane of Northwestern University.

[102] *Mon. Rev.*, LII, 377; LIII, 1 and 97; May, July, and Aug., 1775. The *London Review* agreed in substance with this judgment.

temperament; and it was probably well for his immediate reputation that Mason edited him into some conformity with the *Zeitgeist*. Mason's method, however, was generally accepted. The *Critical*, which printed a long review in two installments,[103] recognized "a new species of biography," and said that the "ingenious" editor had "adopted this plan with great propriety and judgement." *The Annual Register* quoted three sets of extracts from Gray's prose and poetry and from Mason's life,[104] and gave also a brief review.[105]

Diaries and letters of the day contain much praise of Mason's work. "I am charmed with it," wrote Walpole to Cole, "and prefer it to all the biography I ever saw," [106] and, although Cole was at first "by no means satisfied," Walpole seems at last to have converted him.[107] Walpole would not be satisfied by any ordinary recognition: "Never," he writes, "was a book which people pretended to expect so much with impatience, less devoured — at least in London, where quartos are not of quick digestion." He sent Mason all the gossip he could collect: "Lord Nuneham [Harcourt] has just been here and says everybody he has heard speak of it, likes your book; that does not content me; they must say as Mr. Chute and I do, that we will read it for the rest of our lives." [108] Mrs. Delany enjoyed the *Memoirs* "extreamly" [109]; Mrs. Champone, after reading them, wished "for Mr. Mason's acquaintance" [110]; the Hon. Mrs. Boscawen read the book, and reread it, giving over her evenings to it regularly; and Hannah More hoped that Mason's "*own* fame would meet with *such a guardian* and his *own life such a biographer*." [111] Garrick considered it "very ingenious." [112] The elder Colman enjoyed it.[113] Wesley read it with interest but was "quite shocked" at the "contempt" with which Gray speaks of Mason.[114] Beattie pronounced

[103] *Crit. Rev.*, XXXIX, 378 and 460.
[104] *Ann. Reg.*, 1775, 36-45, 161-164, 202-204. (See "*Characters.*")
[105] *Ibid.*, 1775, 226-229.
[106] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VI, 199.
[107] *Ibid.*, VI, 206.
[108] *Ibid.*, VI, 203.
[109] Delany *Correspondence*, Sec. Ser., II, 109.
[110] *Ibid.*, 125.
[111] *Ibid.*, 144.
[112] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VI, 299.
[113] Colman, George, *Posthumous Letters*, 310.
[114] Wesley, *Journal*, VI, 134. Wesley, not knowing Gray or his sharp style of writing, fails, like most modern commentators, to take these characterizations from whence they come. As a matter of fact, in Gray's mouth, they are not at all contemptuous. See Chapter VII.

Gray's "the best letters that have been printed in our language."[115] Even Robinson, who had declared Mason unequal to the work and had refused to send his letters, was constrained to admit that he had "executed his task better than he expected."[116] The dissenting voices were few in number. Johnson "found it mighty dull."[117] Cumberland was "disappointed"[118]; and Sir Edgerton Brydges thought Mason's biography "very barren,"[119] but he objected to the epistolary method *per se*.

Unlike most of Mason's works, the *Memoirs* had a lasting fame. This was doubtless due in part to the interest in Gray; but it can also be said that the book has been a mainstay of that poet's reputation. Sir Leslie Stephen says that it was "not the kind of book to generate a new enthusiasm" in Gray[120]; but the facts do not seem to bear out this statement. Mason's work was certainly preferred to that of the editors who immediately followed him. In 1788, the *Gentleman's*, although it praised Wakefield, and called his work "learned and ingenious," evidently thought Mason's *Memoirs* better[121]; and, in 1814, the *Quarterly*, in reviewing Mathias' *Gray*, preferred Mason's "inimitable edition."[122] In 1770, Beattie said that Gray's works, except the *Elegy*, were known only to "a few."[123] After the appearance of the *Memoirs*, however, criticisms of Gray and imitations of his poetry seem to have been somewhat more common.[124] Some, like Murphy, moreover, who did not care for Gray's poems,[125] and Cowper who had not cared for Gray,[126] were attracted by Mason's *Memoirs*.

Not only did Mason accomplish his main object of defending Gray's reputation as a poet and as a scholar, but he also started a new literary *genre*. Not without some truth did Walpole declare:

[115] Forbes, *Life of Beattie*, 494.

[116] Gray, *Works*, Child ed., Boston 1866, ciii. Professor Child, as recently as 1866, declared that "a more interesting publication of the kind never appeared in English literature" (iv).

[117] Boswell, *Johnson*, Hill ed., III, 31. Croker remarks in a note: "Nothing but a very strong prejudice could have made Johnson thus speak of those very entertaining letters." 1850 ed., N.Y., 530.

[118] Walpole *Letters*, Toynbee ed., IX. 288.

[119] Brydges, *Autobiog.*, I, 116.

[120] Stephen, *Hours in a Library*, III, 101.

[121] *Gent. Mag.*, LVI, 591, and LVIII, 24.

[122] *Quart. Rev.*, XI, 312.

[123] Forbes, *Life of Beattie*, 110.

[124] *Gent. Mag.*, XLV, 339, 491, etc. See also Northup, *Bibl. of Gray*.

[125] Boswell, *Johnson*, Hill ed., III, 31.

[126] Cowper, *Letters*, London, 1904, I, 141.

". . . You have fixed the method of biography and whoever will write a life must imitate you." [127] Sir William Forbes, in his introduction, says that he is going to model his *Life of James Beattie* on Mason's *Gray*.[128] Hayley's *Life of Cowper*, and Lord Teignmouth's *Life of Sir William Jones* also followed Mason,[129] and so did William Beattie's *Life and Letters of Campbell*,[130] Moore's *Byron*, and Lockhart's *Scott*.[131] Mason's greatest follower, however, is Boswell,[132] who by virtue of his active pencil and note-book, advanced far beyond Mason in the photographic portraiture of personality.

Mason's *Memoirs of Whitehead* were published in 1788.[133] The work is a relapse into the older type of biography[134]: the bald facts of Whitehead's life are glossed over with unmeaning praise; the style is full of conventional felicities and transitional tags.[135] Mason takes this occasion to vent his ill opinion of Boswell and Johnson; and to judge Whitehead's plays according to the "unities" and the Neo-classical rule and line.[136] *The Critical Review* called it the "pleasing portrait of an amiable man" but attacked Mason for indiscriminate condemnation of Johnson.[137] The *Monthly* praised Whitehead, but thought the biography not as good as that of Gray; and it charged Mason with using his friend's life as "a vehicle for the abuse of Dr. Johnson": "On the whole," says the *Monthly*, "it is manifest that Mr. M. is not only angry with the good people of England for talking so much and so long about Johnson, but that he owes the Public a grudge for the cool reception given to his dramas in representation." [138] Boswell was annoyed at Mason's "sneering observation," [139] and declared that

[127] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VI, 211.

[128] Forbes, *Life of Beattie*, v. He also discusses the propriety of printing private letters, vi-vii.

[129] Brydges, *Cen. Lit.*, IV, 316. Teignmouth explains his scheme, but gives Mason no credit (I, x). Apparently this method of biography was being taken for granted as the method, even as early as 1807.

[130] See Beattie's *Preface*, viii; he purposes "to omit nothing that his true friends would regret to lose; to revive nothing that Campbell himself would wish forgotten." Beattie, in 1849, still feels that the dead should be allowed a certain reticence; but he has progressed beyond Mason in giving at least general notice of his suppressions.

[131] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VI, 199, n.

[132] Boswell, in his Preface, gives Mason full credit.

[133] Prefixed to vol. III of Whitehead's *Poems*.

[134] Cf. Seccombe, *Boswell*, 218.

[135] E.g., 43.

[136] E.g., 56.

[137] *Crit. Rev.*, LXV, 177-182.

[138] *Mon. Rev.*, LXXVIII, 177 *et seq.*

[139] See opening of Boswell's *Johnson*, and *Nat. Rev.*, LV, 253.

the *Memoirs of Whitehead* were "literally no *Life*, but a mere dry narrative of facts."

Of Mason's sermons, although they constitute almost a whole volume of his *Works*,[140] little need be said. They occupy a slight place in contemporary documents. Whitehead testifies to Mason's early success as a preacher[141]; in 1761, he is "metamorphosing some good old homilies into new-fashioned sermons, and consequently spoiling every period of them"[142]; and Frederick Montagu wrote Mrs. Delany on November 1, 1781, that Mason has just preached in York Cathedral, "an *excellent* sermon. None of your *nettles*, but such as any of your visitors or any persons who visit might have heard and been edified."[143] The sixteen sermons in Volume IV are on characteristic subjects. Beside purely orthodox themes, such as *On the Self-satisfaction which results from the practice of Moral Duties*,[144] there are a number that have a tinge of Sentimentalism, such as *Christian Benevolence*,[145] *Christian Compassion*,[146] and *God, the Universal and equal Father of all Mankind*,[147] and that on the suppression of the slave-trade. There are also attacks on the "Infidelity" of the Deists and the "Enthusiasm" of the Methodists[148]; and Mason does not omit the old themes of independence,[149] patriotism,[150] and liberty.[151] The sermons are carefully organized and written with dignity and ease, if not with any great brilliance. The most notable is that on the slave-trade, preached at York in 1788, and published shortly after in pamphlet form.[152] Mason was an enthusiastic champion of abolition. Cradock said that "Mason's fine Discourse" would "bear any competition. It had a great effect at that time, and it will always continue to be admired and felt, where humane intercession can have any weight."[153]

Mason's miscellaneous prose pieces, aside from those on painting and music,[154] are of very slight importance. His *Animadversions*

[140] *Works*, IV.
[141] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 214.
[142] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 190.
[143] Delany *Correspondence*, Sec. Ser., III, 63.
[144] *Works*, IV, 13.
[145] *Ibid.*, IV, 121.
[146] *Ibid.*, IV, 55.
[147] *Ibid.*, IV, 175.
[148] *Ibid.*, IV, 41.
[149] *Ibid.*, IV, 81.
[150] *Ibid.*, IV, 105.
[151] *Ibid.*, IV, 27.
[152] See Bibl. A and Davies, *York Press*, 304.
[153] Cradock, *Memoirs*, 192.
[154] These will be discussed in Chapter XIII.

on York Lunatic Asylum, published in 1772,[155] seems[156] of small account. Lort cared "little" about it, but called Walpole's attention to the publication because of Mason's being the author.[157] The condition of lunatic asylums was apparently a crying abuse in the eighteenth century[158]; but Mason's main criticism seems to be that the salaries of the physician and the apothecary had become the chief concern of the institution. His argument was largely exploded by a *Letter from a Subscriber to York Lunatic Asylum*.[159]

Mason's other two prose pieces are both of a theological nature. The first, *A Conjectural Essay* on the meaning of the word Angel,[160] and the second, *An Examination of the Prophesy, contained in the 24th Chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel*.[161] The first essay endeavors to show that the ἀγγελος of St. Paul's *Epistles* was not of the episcopal hierarchy.[162] It boasts a considerable display of Latin and Greek scholarship and shows a wide reading in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century theologians. The second essay is designed to show that St. Matthew, XXIV, refers "entirely and exclusively to the destruction of Jerusalem, and not to the end of the World."[163] It is carefully written, is heavily annotated, and has a succinct summary of its four main points at the end.[164] Both pieces show Mason in the light of the learned divine; but they do not seem to have awakened comment in his own day; and they have doubtless long been superseded.

As a letter-writer, Mason has received scant courtesy. In 1854, *Blackwood's*, following Mitford, said that Mason's letters, except those that throw light on Gray, are not "of the least value."[165] Lowell contrasts "Gray's perfect elegance" with "the vulgar jauntiness and clumsy drollery" of Mason[166]; and Tovey declared him "capable of solecisms that would disgrace a schoolboy."[167] Beside

[155] Davies, *York Press*, 282 and *Brit. Mus. Cat.*

[156] The only copy I know of is in the British Museum. I have looked in vain in Harvard, the Boston Athenæum, Boston Public Library, Columbia, New York Public Library, and in the Congressional Library at Washington. A short excerpt is, however, printed in the *Critical Review*, LXVI, 166.

[157] Nichols, *Lit. Illust.*, VII, 552.

[158] *Gent. Mag.*, XXXIII, 25-26, 96, 126, etc.; *Crit. Rev.*, XV, 239-240; and XXXIII, 335-336.

[159] *Mon. Rev.*, LXXIX, 381-382.

[160] See *Works*, IV, 217.

[161] *Ibid.*, IV, 247.

[162] *Ibid.*, IV, 232 and 245.

[163] *Ibid.*, IV, 251.

[164] *Ibid.*, IV, 273-274.

[165] *Blackwood's Mag.*, LXXV, 246.

[166] *Latest Lit. Ess.*, ed. 1892, 26.

[167] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, xiv. What of Gray, Walpole, and Johnson?

this, we may place Gray's own testimony: "Adieu, dear Mason, and remember me; and remember too that I have neither company, nor pleasure, nor spirits here, and that a letter from you stands in place of all these." [168] The opinions of recent critics have doubtless been gleaned from Mason's replies to Gray and Walpole, and colored by their own bad opinion of Mason. A comparison with Walpole or with Gray, puts Mason to a severe test; and Mason, moreover, was not always at his best. To Gray, he seldom writes with the utter abandon that is likely to produce the most brilliant results. The early Walpole letters are too full of the business of *Memoirs* and of satires to allow Mason's pen to wander fancy free; and the later letters are clouded by the constraint of growing estrangement. The *Harcourt Papers*, of which only fifty copies have been printed, and those privately at Oxford, show Mason at his best; and one judges that the letters to Mrs. Delany, which Madame D'Arblay classed with those of Young and Swift, must have been of a superior quality. Unfortunately, most of these latter seem to have been burned by the owner in 1786.[169]

Mason's correspondence was extensive. He had many friends scattered throughout England; and he travelled so frequently that when he was not writing to one, he was writing to another. By letting his correspondence go for a mere fortnight, he became "horrible in debt" to all his friends[170]; and he declared to Walpole in 1778 that he had "got a quire of much smaller paper," and he "has hopes" it will make him "a much more punctual correspondent." [171] Indeed, he usually wrote but one letter to two or three of Walpole's. Besides letters to Gray, Harcourt, Walpole, and Mrs. Delany, there remains some evidence of correspondence with Wilberforce, Foster, Beattie, Hayley, Sir Samuel Romilly, Boswell, Malone, Warburton, Hurd, Whitehead, Garrick, Reynolds, Mrs. Siddons, and others.[172]

Mason had "two styles in prose" — a fact noticed by Mme. D'Arblay: "I have seen," she says, "compositions rather than epistles, which he wrote formerly to Mrs. Delany, so full of satire,

[168] Mason-Gray *Correspondence*, 129.

[169] D'Arblay, *Diary*, III, 70; and Ser. V, 309.

[170] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 89.

[171] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VII, 68, n.

[172] Byron found several Mason letters in Italy, and sent them to Murray. Byron, *Works*, IV, 223-224.

point and epigrammatic severity and derision. . . ." He embellished them, moreover, with pen and pencil caricatures.[173] The more serious and formal type of letters was the usual decorous epistle phrased in dignified and somewhat conventional language. One of the best examples, perhaps, is his letter to Malone on May 26, 1792[174]; but there is nothing to distinguish it from thousands of others written during the period. The type more interesting to us is that which Mason wrote in the spirit of literary hide-and-seek — colloquially, with a vivid concreteness and often a satirical sting. R. G. spoke of the "simplicity and perspicuity" of his conversation[175]; and Mrs. Siddons declared him "a great humorist"[176]: this spirit seems to have entered into Mason's best letters.

Those to Gray and Walpole have their good touches. Take, for instance, the letter to Gray on the lion-hunting Mr. Bedingfield:

> You cannot think what a favorite I am of Mr. Bedingfield's. I might have had an agate and gold snuff-box from him the other day, and why think you? only because I gave him an etching of Mr. Gray. "Lord, Sir," says I, "would you repay me with a thing of this value for a thing not worth three half pence?" "What," says he, "a portrait of Mr. Gray done by Mr. Mason of no value!" &c. &c. In short he pressed me to accept it till there was hardly any such thing as refusing; however, I refused to the last, which you will own to be miraculous when you consider my avarice, my fondness for trinkets, and when I tell you the box was wonderfully handsome, and withal had a French hinge. This said gentleman is very shortly going to leave York entirely, without having resolved in what other place to reside. To say the truth, I am not displeased at this; for of all the admirers I have had in my time, I think he would tire me the most was I to have much of him. He goes from hence to Norfolk first with his family, and that some time this next month, and intends you a visit in his way. Get your arm-chair new stuffed; — no, the old stuffing will have more inspiration in it.[177]

The Harcourt letters contain many a delightful *tour de force*. Perhaps Mason's knowledge that Harcourt was carefully preserving them,[178] gave him a special incentive. Certainly, moreover,

[173] D'Arblay, *Diary*, V, 309. As these were written in Mason's "season of democracy," Mrs. Delany probably destroyed them.

[174] See Prior, *Malone*, 194.

[175] Polwhele, *Traditions and Recollections*, 218.

[176] Fitzgerald, *The Kembles*, I, 252.

[177] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 11.

[178] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 23.

Mason gave his pen freer rein in writing them. On November 10, 1758, Mason wrote from Aston:

My Lord, — As to my own Portrait wch you are so obliging to request, I can only say that if Wilson could make a picture of me capable of enjoying your Lordship's conversation, I should give it you with more delight than ever I did anything in my life. The honor you do me in giving me thus a place in your apartment I look upon as having already a place in your esteem & affection. And indeed that would make me more easily submit to what otherwise would look like vanity in me. Painting was design'd to represent the Gods or great Men that stood next to them; but friendship I see takes no measure of anything but by itself, & when it is great & high will make the object so, & raise it above its level. This is that wch has deceived you into my picture and made you put so great a compliment upon me, & I do not know what you will find to justify yourself to those who shall see it in your possession; you may indeed tell them the original is as much yours as the picture, but this will be no great boast, when the man is not more considerable than his shadow.

Now on the supposition that your Lordship has fairly read the foregoing page, I suppose you to cry out, "what the Duce is Mason about? I never heard him either talk so or write so." Very true; but, in the last page, be it known to your Lordship, he transcrib'd part of a letter of Mr. Locke's, & this he did for two good purposes, first, because He knew not what to say himself upon the subject, & secondly, because he thought this transcription might prove to you (if you wanted a proof of it) "That great Philosophers can, if they please, be as affected and coxcombical as any Poet of us all," & if you are not convinc'd he refers you to the rest of the Letter (Vide Locke's Works Fol. 3rd vol., page 550). . . .

Mason ends by promising a picture of himself "Wigg'd, Banded, Cassocked, Gown'd, and to crown all, Scarfed." [179]

In October of the next year, he tells how the stout Miss Chudleigh "going thro' the Ante-Chamber yesterday after the Princess, stooped to take up a dirty piece of paper, wch she suspected might be a billet-doux" [180]:

She was too fat to stoop low enough, & therefore a Physician, more fat than herself lent his assistence; they could neither of them get their hands below their knees, & therefore, after two or three ineffectual

[179] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 8 *et seq.* The anacoluthon in the second sentence stands so in the original.

[180] *Ibid.*, VII, 13.

efforts, were obliged to desist, making one another a bow and a courtesy. The pages laugh'd, the gentlemen ushers smil'd, the officers on guard sneer'd, & only the Chaplain in waiting [Mason], with a decency peculiar to himself, kept his countenance. . . .

There are, moreover, Mason's mock description of *Milord's* intended visit to Paris,[181] and the caricature *à la* Hogarth of my Lord at his toilette, "with two French hairdressers cutting his hair, & his *valet de chambre*, Louis (a Swiss), standing behind, with Bottarelli the Opera poet, to whom he is reading, on a chair on one side." [182] There is the *Ode* in five stanzas written to mollify the offended Louis; and there is the "Bulle to our dearly beloved Simon, Cardinal of Nuneham, our chosen Legate . . ."; there is the letter on his "new sunk fence" "four feet deep" and his new Indian tragedy, the five acts "300 ll long apiece" — "the former broken by various intermediate shrubs, but the latter by no intervening Episodes," and "unity of place as well preserved in the one as in the other." [183] There is the half-letter in blank verse,[184] and the charming description of the blackbird "that is hatching her second brood in my laurel hedge." [185]

Mason's letters are certainly not without their charm; and, indeed, his other prose is not without its importance in literary history. His *Memoirs of Gray* initiate a better form of biography; and are in part responsible for Gray's subsequent reputation. His pamphlets and sermons, although they have little interest for us, did Mason credit in his day. Classical rhetoric recognized three types of style: low, middle, and high: the first exemplified in the intimate letters of Gray, the second in the *Spectator* essays, and the third in Gibbon's *History* or the oratorical works of Burke. Mason's biographies, sermons, and essays seem to constitute an attempt at the last type: they have something of its conventional flourishes, grandiloquent abstractions, and artful constructions. Gibbon makes these the means toward a prose that resounds like *Paradise Lost*; but, in Mason, the effect is rather empty to our ears: the high style is not always suited to the material he had to convey, and sometimes that material itself was rather slight. Very much as Shaftesbury abused the exclamatory style, Mason abused

[181] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 26 *et seq.*
[182] *Ibid.*, VII, 32.
[183] *Ibid.*, VII, 87 *et seq.*
[184] *Ibid.*, VII, 90.
[185] *Ibid.*, VII, 142.

the rolling periods of rhetoric. His age, however, was not altogether unappreciative; for it was more insistent on magnitude of form than on congruity between form and substance. Walpole considered Mason's style superlatively good.[186] Johnson, on the other hand, declared it "fit for the second table," [187] and Norton Nicholls[188] says Gray thought Mason "a bad prose writer." Gray's selection of Mason to help him in the *History of English Poetry* makes this statement especially open to question. The best of Mason's letters, however, are written in the low style of intimacy; they are full of precious fancy and lightly touched satire; and, at their best, they constitute a sprightly and fascinating contribution to the supreme period of letter-writing.

[186] Walpole *Letters*, Toynbee ed., IX, 180, 194.

[187] Boswell, *Johnson*, Hill ed., III, 31.

[188] Nicholls, 39. Nicholls, however, is not a trustworthy witness; and he disliked Mason.

CHAPTER XIII

MASON'S RELATIONS TO MUSIC AND THE PICTORIAL ARTS

CONNOISSEUR[1] and *dilettante*[2] are eighteenth-century words: one gave its name to a weekly[3]; the other came into the language from a fashionable club; and the spirit of both was rife in polite society. The gentleman of taste dabbled in the arts and sciences — sometimes with results as momentous as Walpole's dabbling in Gothic at Strawberry Hill, or Bishop Percy's *penchant* for old ballads. In this respect, Mason is indeed typical of his period. Not content with ecclesiastical offices and political schemes, with his reputation dramatic and poetic and with constant social activity, he "was desirous also of being esteemed a good musician and a good painter."[4] Nor did he confine himself to any one phase of these two media of expression: as critic and as creator, he tried his hand at various pictorial arts; as a musician, he was performer, composer, instrument-maker, and æsthetic theorist. Of his painting, little remains but a translation of Dufresnoy and an etching of Gray; of his music, there is a single anthem still in print; there are four rather interesting essays on English Church music, two libretti[5] and a brief notice in Grove's *Dictionary*, meagre as to fact and inaccurate as to detail.[6]

Music occupied Mason to a considerable degree during his entire life. The many years of his York Precentorship kept it constantly in his mind; but, even before that, he was a long-practised amateur. At an early age, he received elementary instruction from his father:

> . . . A master skill'd his gen'rous care bestow'd
> To teach how concord and how discord meet,
> And form one strain methodically sweet. . . .[7]

[1] First listed by *N.E.D.* in Mandeville, 1714.

[2] First listed in connection with the Dilettante Society in 1733-1734.

[3] *The Connoisseur*, edited by Thornton and George Colman the Elder. It ran through several volumes.

[4] Miller, *Doncaster*, 161, n. 2

[5] Treated in the latter part of Chapter IX.

[6] His institution as rector at Aston is dated the year *before* he took orders.

[7] *Works*, I, 173.

While he was in college, an anonymous eulogist declared him endowed with "Handel's art"[8]; and his undergraduate trips to London for theatre and opera,[9] show an interest much beyond that of the ordinary Cantab. The letters to Gray abound in musical references. The two men exchange notes upon composers.[10] Mason begs news of the opera[11]; and Gray answers with the latest gossip of Elisi and the Paganina.[12] In London, they go to concerts together.[13] At York, Mason had his Cathedral organ; at Aston, his harpsichord[14] and celestinette; and nearby at Netherhall, were the concerts of Mr. Copley, the "Mæcenas" of Doncaster.[15] Mason was somewhat of a patron himself.[16] Avison[17] — the same whom Browning celebrated in his *Parleyings* — and Burney were his friends; and he taught English to the singer Gasparo Pacchierotti.[18] There is a passage written to Walpole in the late '70's, which must ring true to any choir-master: "And now Sir, my matins are finished, and I resume my pen, but the singing boys have bauld so horridly out of tune that I have lost all the good temper I was possessed of after my breakfast when I first sat down to write you."[19]

As a performer, Mason never attempted to gain professional standing. There can be no doubt, however, that he played the harpsichord and the piano. His technique, moreover, must have been at least fair; for Gray, who was no easy critic, wrote to Mason in 1763: "I cannot play them [six lessons for the pianoforte or harpsichord by Karl Bach], though they are not hard; yet I make a smattering that serves 'to deceive my solitary days,' and I figure to myself that I hear you touch them triumphantly."[20]

[8] *London Mag.*, XVIII, 572.

[9] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., I, 169.

[10] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 285.

[11] *Ibid.*, II, 186, 190.

[12] *Ibid.*, II, 196.

[13] *Ibid.*, I, 298.

[14] His wife, according to Gray, could "twiddle on the harpsichord," Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 68.

[15] Southey, *Doctor*, II, 353, and E. Miller, *Doncaster*, 160-161. There he may very well have heard young Herschel play, quite oblivious to the future fame of the astronomer. Miller, 161, n.

[16] Miller, *Doncaster*, 161, n. 2, accuses Mason of befriending young musicians and then, for no reason, suddenly dropping them. The Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 11, simply suggest that he tired of them.

[17] *Works*, III, 385.

[18] Pacchierotti, 1744-1821. See D'Arblay, I, 155 etc.

[19] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., I, 280.

[20] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 14.

When Mason was away from Aston, he "missed" his pianoforte.[21] Even Miller admits that he "performed decently" on the harpsichord.[22] He was accustomed to "play" at Nuneham; and, when he met Mrs. Siddons there, he signalized his approval of her by a duet.[23] Moreover, he played the organ; and, one may infer, his own instrument, the celestinette.

But Mason had also at least a modicum of theoretical knowledge. "R. G.," [24] a young man of some musical education, declared to Polwhele: "His [Mason's] composition in music, specimens of which he has given me, possess so many strokes of originality, that I am convinced had he devoted the same proportion of time in cultivating the smiles and good opinion of that bewitching nymph as he has done to her Parnassian sisters' he would have been equally interesting and great." [25] Mason showed R. G. some music he had "adapted to his own choruses" [26]; and even allowed him to "correct" it. Mrs. Siddons declared Mason "not meanly skilled in choral and scientific composition." [27] Walpole wrote that Burney "celebrated" Mason's "harmonic knowledge" [28] in the notes of his *History of Music*; but Walpole's statement seems inaccurate, for Burney speaks not of Mason's knowledge of harmony but of his theories of word-setting.[29] Mitford had a high opinion of Mason's musical grounding,[30] which he based upon Burney[31] and Tebb[32]; but Miller declared that he and others had tried, without success, to teach Mason harmony, and that the bass parts of all Mason's compositions were "written by another person." [33] Miller's testimony, however, is not above suspicion.[34]

[21] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 286. He had a harpsichord there also. *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 8.

[22] Miller, *Doncaster*, 161, n. 2. Mitford quotes Miller (Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, I, 432). Edward Miller, Mus.D. Cantab., critic, and organist of Doncaster, knew Mason, and thought little of his musical ability; but Mitford is probably right in accusing Miller of jealousy of Mason's critical writings. Mitford says that Miller's testimony "is not to be received without much allowance." Certainly Miller and Mason were not on good terms at the time of Miller's writing.

[23] Fitzgerald, *The Kembles*, I, 252-253.

[24] "Mr. Greville," according to Southey, *Doctor*, IV, 272.

[25] Polwhele, *Traditions and Recollections*, 221.

[26] *Ibid.*, 197.

[27] Boaden, *Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons*, 109. Her fitness to judge is questionable.

[28] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., I, 232.

[29] This matter will be taken up later.

[30] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, I, 432-433.

[31] Burney's *Metastasio*, I, 109, n. See also numerous complimentary references indexed in his *History*.

[32] T. Tebb, *Choral Service of the Church*, 387.

[33] Miller, *Doncaster*, 161, n. 2.

[34] See Mitford in Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, I, 432.

What little light Mason's own work throws on the matter, does not support Miller's charges. Unfortunately, but one composition of Mason's remains. The tunes in the *Anthem Book* have been ascribed to him[35]; but both the title-page[36] and the Walpole letters[37] show that he supplied only the editing and the *Essay on Cathedral Music.*[38] Most of the material[39] came from the *Old Version* by Sternhold and Hopkins[40]; but some was from other sources.[41] Sir John Hawkins' *History of Music* supplied the notes, which Mason compiled with "great labor and pain." [42] Mason's other "compositions in music,"[43] including the two anthems sung in York Cathedral,[44] have vanished and probably never existed out of manuscript. His *Lord of All Power and Might,* an anthem performed at the Chapel Royal,[45] is the one thing that has come down to us. Writing in the early nineteenth century, J. H. M. says it was "held in the highest esteem from the psalmodic simplicity, which it possesses throughout." [46] It is still in print and presumably still given.[47] The present arrangement is for mixed quartet and organ; and, as this is probably the original form, we must suppose that, if Mason knew no harmony, at least three of the four parts and at least half the organ accompaniment are by another hand; and the unqualified ascription to Mason which the present publication bears, certainly does not imply that he had such a small part in the composition.

The piece is but a single sheet; and the text is very simply set; the accompaniment is full organ; and the expression mark, *Andante.* Mason avoids the use of counterpoint, because that would inevitably require the singing of different parts of the text

[35] D. G. Mason, *The Art of Music,* XII, 14.

[36] See *Brit. Mus. Cat.* which lists two editions, 1782 and 1834.

[37] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence,* II, 37.

[38] A revised form of the essay appeared in the *Works* of 1811, III, 327.

[39] *Harcourt Papers,* VII, 83.

[40] See L. F. Benson, *The English Hymn,* London, 1915, 27 *et seq.,* 48 *et seq.,* 76-77. Shenstone celebrated the *Old Version* in *The Schoolmistress,* stanza xiv.

[41] Bumpus, *Cathedral Music,* 52.

[42] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence,* II, 37 and 232. Mason's views did not, in general, agree with Hawkins'; and Mason expected that his essay might offend him. Walpole *Letters,* Cunn. ed., VIII, 163.

[43] Polwhele, *Traditions and Recollections,* 221. Sonneck mentions anonymous incidental music (not Arne's) to *Caractacus.* This may possibly be Mason's.

[44] Miller, *Doncaster,* 161, n. 2.

[45] *Ibid.,* 161.

[46] Brydges, *Cen. Lit.,* VII, 359.

[47] Novello and Co., London.

simultaneously, and so would make it difficult to catch the words.[48] Perhaps, moreover, he was not composer enough to write it. The accent of the verse, with a few exceptions, is reflected in the setting. The general effect, one may judge, would be rather fine tone-masses, leaving an unobscured text,[49] a piece of work in rather definite contrast to the highly figured compositions of the period. On the other hand, it shows neither great inspiration nor great melodic or harmonic invention. Mason was not a composer of note; but the one work we have, does him a sort of credit. It is at least, in his own phrase, "methodically sweet."

Mason's dilettante spirit interested him also in instruments, their construction and improvement, and even their invention. Mason wrote Gray in the summer of 1755: "Oh, Mr. Gray! I bought at Hamburg such a pianoforte, and so cheap! It is a harpsichord too of two unisons, and the jacks serve as mutes when the pianoforte stop is played, by the cleverest mechanism imaginable — won't you buy my Kirkman?" [50] In the spring of 1767, Mason was possessed of a Zumpe piano, a type just being introduced. Gray was "amused" by it; and gave it a qualified approval: "The base is not quite of a piece with the treble, and the higher notes are somewhat dry and sticky. The rest discourses very eloquent music." [51] And in the summer of 1772, Mason hired Walker to put a new stop in his harpsichord, to prolong its notes.[52] The *Encyclopædia Britannica*,[53] moreover, claims for Mason the invention of the modern piano. Such a thesis can hardly be sustained, and the idea probably rose from Mason's new German piano in 1755, or, as Grove suggests,[54] from Mason's purchase of one of the very first Zumpes, or possibly from the "new stop" of 1772.[55]

[48] The "abstruse harmonical Proportions" and "multifarious contexture of parts" of polyphonic music, were anathema to Mason. *Works*, III, 327.

[49] W. L. Wright, *William Mason, as a Critic of Music*, a MS. M.A. thesis of New York University, 1917, contains a marked copy of the anthem and some brief critical notes.

[50] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 265. Tovey appends interesting notes on the mechanism of Mason's new piano and on the excellence of Kirkman (Kirchmann) pianos at about this period.

[51] *Ibid.*, III, 138. Tovey's note is interesting; and even more interesting is his note, II, xvii, showing the pseudo-philological efforts of Mitford and Gosse to explain "Zumpe"; as Tovey points out, it is simply the maker's name.

[52] Nichols, *Illust.*, VIII, 637.

[53] 4th ed., 1810, *sub* Pianoforte.

[54] Grove's *Dictionary*, s. v., discusses the matter, and points out that Mason was probably "one of Zumpe's early patrons."

[55] One of the essential differences between the harpsichord and the piano, is the latter's greater ability for prolongation by pedal mechanism.

There is, however, absolutely no doubt about Mason's inventing the celestinette.[56] Whitehead wrote to Harcourt in 1774 that it produced "the most agreeable music" he ever heard.[57] In February of the following year, Walpole was "jealous" of Mason's "harpsico-violin"[58]; and, in 1780, Walpole declared his approbation of an essay which Mason had written on the subject.[59] Mitford, when in 1851, he visited Aston, found in MS. an extended description of the celestinette dated March 30, 1761; and he says it was "still remembered as resembling in shape the old spinette or harpsichord."[60] Mrs. Delany described in some detail both the mechanism and the effect of the "sweet new instrument," which gave out "a delicate, exquisite sound, something between a fiddle and the glasses." It was, she says, less than two feet long and a foot and a half wide; and she subjoined a rough sketch.[61] It seems to have been a combination of the harpsichord, which supplied percussion to the tones, and the violin, which sustained them. "Like many other attempts to combine in one instrument the effects of totally different methods of tone-production, it speedily became obsolete."[62]

Mason may have played a little, composed a little, and tried his hand at instrument-making; but essentially he was a critic of music, or better perhaps, a theorist. His four *Essays, Historical and Critical, on English Church Music* were first[63] published at York in 1795,[64] and appeared again in the *Works* of 1811.[65] The first is on organ music; the second, on the relation of the cathedral choir to the organ; the third, on parochial psalmody; and the fourth, on the relation of setting to words.[66] The first ten pages or more of the first essay seem to have been intended as an introduction to the group. They contain Mason's general

[56] Dr. Long who was, like Mason, interested in Zumpe pianos (Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 138) also invented or at least "made a lyricord" and presented it to the king. Long had, besides, a considerable interest in "musical glasses." (*Ibid.*, III, 18.)

[57] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 311.

[58] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., I, 167.

[59] *Ibid.*, II, 66, or Cunn. ed., VII, 815.

[60] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, I, 432. Mitford quotes only the very beginning of the description. See also Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., V, 213, n. 2.

[61] Delany, *Autobiography*, II, 90-91.

[62] Wright, M.A. thesis, N. Y. Univ., 1917.

[63] Except *Essay II* which had already appeared in the *Anthem Book* of 1782. (*Works*, III, 327; and Davies, *York Press*, 291-292.)

[64] See *Brit. Mus. Cat.* and Bibl. A.

[65] *Works*, III, 287 *et seq.*

[66] *Ibid.*, III, 393.

ideas on the æsthetics of music and a rapid survey of the evolution of the organ.[67] He does not seem to bind either of these subjects very closely to what follows; for, after all, his essays have very little to do with either philosophy or history, and are rather the comments and criticisms of an enlightened amateur guided by "Reason and Commonsense."[68] This introduction, however, is interesting as a means of evaluating Mason's æsthetic comprehension, and the breadth and depth of his scholarship.

For his facts, Mason relied chiefly on a few authoritative works. He says that his history of the organ as an instrument, is taken from Dom Bedos de Celles[69]; and his notes refer to Burney,[70] to Hawkins,[71] and to the *Dictionnaire de Musique*.[72] These were the best reference-books of the day; and, seemingly, Mason often used them without verification; for he copied at least one error.[73] But, on the other hand, he corrects a mistranslation of Hawkins[74]; and, sometimes, York Library supplied him with old documents at first hand.[75] In the history of musical criticism, his knowledge does not seem to be very extensive. He refers to Addison as the first writer to treat music with "philosophical precision."[76] If one speaks of the "philosophical precision" of Addison's few paragraphs, one should apply the phrase even more to a number of his

[67] This survey (*Works*, III, 296 *et seq.*) occurs after he has apparently ended his introduction. It forms a sort of special introduction to *Essay I* on organ-music.

[68] *Works*, III, 294.

[69] *Works*, III, 299. *L'Art du Facteur des Orgues*, Paris, 1766-78. This was the authoritative work of the day. See Hopkins, 9, n. 5. Mason says (303) that "an Organ, in any degree deserving the name, could not have been fabricated many years before the æra of our Reformation." The evolution of the instrument from its classical originals is, of course, a long process; and it is a mere matter of definition just where we shall begin to apply the term *organ*; but certainly the Middle Ages had a hydraulic *organum*, producing tone under the same general conditions as our organ; and authorities of to-day regularly term it an *organ*. See Audsley, ch. I, Hopkins, 5; and cf. Degering, *Die Orgel, bis zur Karolingerzeit*.

[70] *Works*, III, 298, 300, 318, etc. On the other hand, Burney's *History* had quoted the *Essay* on cathedral music, even on matters of history, III, 600, 609; IV, 191, n., etc.

[71] *Works*, III, 287, 330, etc.

[72] *Ibid.*, III, 304, 307, etc.

[73] See Hopkins, 17, n. Hopkins, 10, quotes Mason on Vitruvius almost as if Mason were an authority! G. A. Audsley's *Art of Organ-Building*, London, 1905, ch. I, covers the history of Classical and Mediæval organ-building; and H. Degering has treated the earlier period in detail in his *Die Orgel, ihre Erfindung und ihre Geschichte bis zur Karolingerzeit*, Münster, 1905.

[74] *Works*, III, 339, n.

[75] *Ibid.*, 336, 339, 343, 366. *Essay II* is the best document.

[76] *Works*, III, 287-288. See *Spectator*, XXIX, CDV, DCXXX, etc.

contemporaries[77] and predecessors,[78] and especially to the commentators on Elizabethan song-books,[79] for many of these writers were professional musicians; and Addison was the merest amateur. Of continental critics, Mason seems to have known few beyond Rousseau[80]; and he has no appreciation for early French music and apparently no grasp of the historical importance of Lully.[81] Mason's scholarship in music was largely confined to the ready-reference book; and the essays aim to cultivate taste rather than to increase erudition.

His æsthetics have not much more bearing on the main point of his essay than his parade of learning; but, in themselves, they have sufficient significance to warrant discussion. The influence of Winkelmann and Goethe[82] had not yet established the theory of art as an independent branch of philosophy; and, for most eighteenth-century writers, Aristotle's *Poetics* served for all there was to know about the Beautiful.[83] Unfortunately, Aristotle was still seen chiefly through the errors of Renaissance commentators; and, of these errors, one of the most fundmental was the translation of Aristotle's μίμησις as literal copy.[84] Although Mason used Twining's edition, in which the commentary corrects this error,[85] nevertheless he fell into it, probably by inheritance from Harris and Beattie, whom he mentions in his notes.[86] If one starts with the

[77] For instance: A. Bedford, *The Great Abuse of Music*, London, 1711, especially Part II, ch. ix, x, and xi; W. Turner, *Philosophical Essay on Music*, London, 1724; and even W. Holder, *Treatise of Harmony*, London, 1731.

[78] For instance: J. Playford, *The Skill of Music*, London, 1658, 1660, 1662, etc.

[79] Only a few years before (1771), T. Morley's *Introduction to Practical Music*, first published in 1597, had been reprinted; and the list of subscribers mentions at least two of Mason's friends, Dr. Burney, and Miller of Doncaster. See Barrett, 49 *et seq.* For the æsthetics of music in the Middle Ages, see H. Albert, *Die Musikanschauung des Mittelalters*, Halle, 1905.

[80] Even Rameau's excellent little *Traité de Musique*, Paris, 1738, is passed over —no wonder Mason knew nothing of such early works as Artusi *Delle Imperfettioni della Musica*, Venice, 1600.

[81] *Works*, III, 289. See L. de la Laurencie, *Lully*, Paris, 1911, 102 *et seq.*; and H. Prunières, *Lully*, Paris, [1909?], 91 etc.

[82] Baumgarten's *Æsthetica* (1750) gave rise to the term in German. See H. Riemann, *Die Elemente der Musikalischen Aesthetik*, Berlin and Stuttgart, [1900], 1.

[83] See I. Bywater, *Aristotle on the Art of Poetry*, Oxford, 1909, vii; and also a paper on Aristotelian μίμησις by the present writer in *Publ. Mod. Lang. Assoc.*, September, 1921.

[84] Cf. S. H. Butcher, *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*, London, 1902, ii.

[85] Mason (*Works*, III, 287) notes having used T. Twining's Aristotle's *Treatise on Poetry*. See especially *Dissertation II* on *Imitation as applied to Music*. The edition is richly annotated.

[86] Mason may be referring to Beattie's *Letter to Blair on Scotch Psalmody*, privately published, according to *Brit.*

idea of art as a literal copy of the phenomena of external Nature, it is almost impossible to justify music; for, when notes try to copy, the result is usually ludicrous; witness the crawling of the worm in Handel's *Creation*.[87] On the other hand, most of the best music, especially in Mason's day, was "*pure*" or "*absolute*" — the fugues of Bach for instance or the sonatas of Haydn and Handel.[88] Harris went outside Aristotle, and justified music as an art by its power to raise "Affections," i.e., emotions and passions[89]; but still he much prefers it when combined with words.[90] Mason, in like manner, is obliged to go outside Aristotle, and in his opening sentence declares: "Music, as an imitative art, ranks so much below Poetry and Painting, that, in my own opinion, which I have found confirmed by many later writers of the best judgement, it can hardly be so termed with propriety."[91] He then proceeds to justify it on the narrow ground that, in common with poetry, it has rhythm. He has, however, grasped the essential fact that rhythm is the fundamental element in music; and many modern theorists would agree with his making melody and harmony, important as they are, secondary to it.[92]

At the end of his long history of organ-music, Mason finally comes to the first main heading of his essay. He points out that, since the Reformation, the organ has been "employed singly in order to suffer the Priests and the choir to take their breath." He adds that, in the Church of England, this music was usually played extempore, and went by the name of a "voluntary"[93]; and it is this purely instrumental music that is the subject of Mason's comment. Extempore performance, he says, may be excellent in itself[94]; but only the exceptional organist is sufficiently "*skilful*

Mus. Cat., in 1778. James Harris's *Three Treatises*, London, 1744, quite misconstrued Aristotle, and so could hardly justify music as an art at all.

[87] Richard Strauss in the *Domestic Symphony* tried to put into symphonic form material such as Hogarth put into *Marriage à la Mode*—with the result that no one can understand it without a printed explanation.

[88] Even the opera of the day, which was chiefly Italian, was in fact, "absolute" music; for it did not in the least reflect the ideas or the emotions of the libretto. Vocal display was the prime requisite for an *aria*.

[89] Harris, *Three Treatises*, 95. Harris was a person of intellectual distinction in his day. See Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., I, 421.

[90] Harris, *Three Treatises*, 99.

[91] *Works*, III, 287.

[92] *Works*, III, 292. Cf. H. Riemann, *Die Elemente der Musikalischen Aesthetik*, Berlin and Stuttgart, [1900], 133.

[93] *Works*, III, 306.

[94] He especially praises Handel's extempore capriccios between the acts of

both in the theory and practice of his art" [95] to extemporize acceptably[96]; and, moreover, an extempore voluntary may be inappropriate, and not "preparative to devotion." Mason's recommendation is to discard the extempore playing in favor of a set piece, some "march," [97] or solemn air that by its "pleasing simplicity" shall "have the power of soothing the contemplative mind." [98] He sums up his point with admirable succinctness: "It were to be wished, therefore, that in our established Church extempore playing were as much discountenanced as extempore praying."

Mason's second dictum is a protest against the intermixing of organ and violin.[99] This objection, he is careful to say, does not come from any depreciation of the violin,[100] but rather from a sense of the incongruity of the combination. This incongruity arises from two fundamental differences in the instruments themselves. In the first place, Mason points out that the organ is "incapable of expressing those delicate gradations of Forte and Piano, Diminuendo and Crescendo," that are so easy to instruments of the violin family.[101] The second incongruity consists in the fact that "all musical sounds breathed from wind instruments [such as the organ] never accord with those drawn from the string by the bow." [102] Both of these statements are perfectly true.[103] The volume of tone in an organ of Mason's day was but little subject to variation without actually changing stops[104]; whereas the violin has by nature an instantaneous flexibility of volume subject to the finest gradations. His second objection, that "by their dissimilarity of tone and temper they miserably injure one another," is equally well-founded. The *timbre* of the two instruments is

his oratorios in Covent Garden. *Works*, III, 305.

[95] *Works*, III, 311.

[96] Especially if the subject be a fugue as Mason suggests! III, 312-313.

[97] Mason (III, 314) wisely points out that the organist would do well to use the softer pipes rather than the trumpet stop, and so avoid too military an effect.

[98] *Works*, III, 312-313.

[99] *Works*, III, 317. "The jocund rebeck," he says ". . . has since Milton's time under the prouder denomination of a Violin, presumed to mingle its heterogeneous tones with those of the Organ, and on some occasions almost to overpower them."

[100] *Works*, III, 318.

[101] *Ibid.*, III, 318.

[102] *Ibid.*, III, 319.

[103] Those who are not purists would admit their truth but explain them as insignificant defects compared to the advantages of combining instruments.

[104] Mason (III, 318) evidently had a poor opinion of the various types of "swell-boxes" and refers disparagingly even to the valuable inventions of Green. See Audsley, II, 39.

obviously different[105]; and as to "temper" (i.e., pitch), the organ, as a key-board instrument, has the scale of Bach's "well-tempered clavichord"; whereas the violin can achieve absolute pitch, one of its chief beauties, which it must sacrifice in order to harmonize with any "well-tempered" instrument. In the last paragraph of the essay, Mason remarks that, after all, the organ without orchestral accompaniment is the most devotional form of music. He describes not ineffectively the Thanksgiving Service at St. Paul's[106] in which six thousand children sang, accompanied only by the organ; and he concludes:

> . . . I am convinced that, if I could have had the happiness of being present at the august ceremony, I should have been infinitely more affected by that plain Cathedral, and still plainer parochial Music, than by a new Te Deum executed by the best and most numerous band of vocal and instrumental performers; even if a genius equal to Handel's had composed the Score and led the Orchestra.

The essay has no summary; but there is a certain logic in it that lends itself to *resumé*. Church music must, above all, be devotional; and, to this end, Mason condemns extempore playing, which is liable to be inappropriately conceived and poorly performed. Violin accompaniments, moreover, are to be discountenanced, partly because organ and violin blend poorly in flexibility and in pitch; partly because the organ alone, "the king of instruments," is most appropriate for devotional music. All of this has very little to do with the array of scholarship on the evolution of the organ, except as Mason shows that the time is particularly ripe for his two reforms. His æsthetic background, the discussion of rhythm as a basis of music, is also very loosely connected with the rest of the essay. But when the reader actually enters the main body of the work itself, he finds, under some needless parade of learning, and much rococo phraseology, a very considerable amount of sound common sense. History has borne Mason out; set pieces have largely taken the place of extempore playing; and there are few churches to-day where the organ is regularly heard with a violin accompaniment.[107]

[105] I never before heard even the strictest purist object to a mingling of *timbres*, however; and it is constantly done in all orchestral music.

[106] *Works*, III, 322. It took place April 24, 1789.

[107] Of course the violin stops on the organ have, in a sense, taken the place

Mason's second essay treats of vocal church music, especially as practiced in the cathedrals of his time.[108] Two-thirds of the essay are given over to a super-abundant historical introduction; and the remainder consists of comments on the setting of anthems, "Services," and versicles.

Mason begins his history with a sweeping condemnation of the "Popish Liturgy" before the Reformation, with its antiphonal choirs and its polyphonic complexity, "as causing confusion in the audience, and rendering the very language it was meant to express unintelligible."[109] The separation from Rome in the sixteenth century brought in a somewhat different style. Marbeck[110] composed music to the new liturgy; and Tallis[111] and Bird[112] followed him in setting the versicles and responses in a simple chant that reflected the sense and measure of the words; but their *Te Deums* and other "Services" were still too complex for verbal distinctness[113]; and their followers, by ramifying the "harmony,"[114] produced a setting which obscured the new English words quite as much as the old setting obscured the Latin. Mason quotes contemporaneous protests against these inappropriate settings both from the musicians Tudway and Marcello and from Erasmus[115]; but no reform came, for "the art of expressing sentiment in musical terms was in an imperfect state."[116] The music of the Restora-

of the instruments themselves; but Mason's objections would scarcely hold against these. Audsley, II, 470, points out that the Viola da Gamba is the only string-stop that antedates 1870; and the gamba corresponds not to the violin, but the 'cello.

[108] The version given in Mason's *Works*, III, 327 *et seq.*, which is being followed here, is a revision of that printed in the *Anthem Book*.

[109] *Works*, III, 327-328. Mason seems to have had an idea, correct, as far as it goes, of the *a capella*, polyphonic music that dominated the cathedrals of Western Europe from the eleventh century to the Reformation. For a good general treatment, see Edward Dickenson, *Music in the History of the Western Church*, New York, 1903, ch. v; or W. A. Barrett, *English Church Composers*, New York and London, 1882, ch. i and ii. F. Clément's *Histoire Générale de la Musique Religieuse*, Paris, 1878, is a more scholarly work, with a valuable bibliography. The source for much of Mason's learning in this field was Boyce's *Cathedral Music*, 1760-1778; *Works*, III, 329-330; see also Barrett, 126-127.

[110] Mason's facts seem to be correct; cf. Dickenson, 337; but *D.N.B.* gives the date of Marbeck's setting as 1549, not 1550—possibly a difference of Old and New Style.

[111] Cf. Bumpus, 35-48, etc.; and Barrett, ch. iii.

[112] See Bumpus 58-68, etc.; and Barrett, ch. iv.

[113] *Works*, I, 330-331.

[114] By "harmony" Mason seems often to mean, not an accompaniment to the melody, but the interrelation of several melodies. In this sense he applies it to polyphonic music.

[115] See also *Works*, III, 363 *et seq.*

[116] *Works*, III, 342.

tion had great "learning and ingenuity"; but both were exercised in counterpoint, and the text was lost in the complexity of the setting.

At this point, Mason's historical introduction merges into the main body of his essay, in which he takes up the three chief elements of cathedral music, anthem, "Services," and versicles. The anthem, he says, had escaped somewhat from the overburdensome setting of the Restoration, only to fall a prey to vocal virtuosity, in which "the frittering of one syllable into almost half a century of semi-quavers" [117] left the text almost inaudible and quite unexpressed. He proposes that anthems should be set to a simple air, appropriate to the rhythm, the emotion, and the meaning of the words, and that this air should absolutely dominate the harmonies[118]: in short, he wished music to be churchly and monophonic. Yet, as Wright remarks, "Mason himself indulges in six parts at the close of his anthem *Lord of All Power and Might.*"[119]

In the *Te Deum*[120] and other "Services," [121] Mason's grievance is that the quantity of the syllables had been sacrificed to counterpoint. Here he applies the same principle, and recommends a sort of chant[122] in which the length of the notes should correspond to the quantity of prose. Mason, steeped in Latin metrics, probably thought of English as a quantitative language; and his ignoring of the strong Teutonic accentual system, resulted in largely invalidating this application of his theory[123]; but his freedom with bars and time-signatures is curiously in agreement with the practice of Debussy and the school of modern French song-writers.[124] In regard to the versicles and responses, Mason recommends a simple chant with organ accompaniment[125]; and, in order to make the

[117] *Works*, III, 349.

[118] *Works*, III, 347, 351, etc.

[119] See W. L. Wright, *William Mason as a Critic of Music*, a MS. thesis for the M.A. degree, New York University, 1917, p. 17.

[120] The disconnection between the words and setting of the *Te Deum* had given rise to objection as early as 1759, *Mon. Rev.*, XX, 86.

[121] See Dickenson, 58, and references indexed in Benson.

[122] Cf. the "Chanting Services" of Hawkins and Kempton, Bumpus, 220-221 and 344.

[123] Wright gives an interesting discussion of these theories from the viewpoint of the practical musician, 20 *et seq.* Yet in *Essay IV*, Mason recognizes some difference between Latin and English, III, 403; but, 407, he calls English a "weakly accented language." The existence of quantity in English verse is not to be denied; but it is largely subservient to accent. See Miss Snell in *Publ. Mod. Lang. Assoc.*, XXXIV, 416.

[124] See Schirmer, *Anthology of Modern French Song*, New York, 1914, *La Chevelure* or *Serenade*, for example.

[125] *Works*, III, 357.

music of the Psalter reflect its sense and rhythm, he urges an especially appropriate chant for each psalm.[126] Mason's theory of church music was soundly based on the idea that it must enforce, rather than obscure, the text. He would have as much of the music as possible simplified for congregational singing — a belief in which Coleridge later concurred[127]; and he recommended that the anthems, which would still require professional talent, be simply set, and that the music interpret the words rather than drown them out or sacrifice their sense to vocal display. The essay shows some learning and considerable good sense. Burney reviewed it, and agreed that composers should pay more attention to the "accent and length of syllables" of the words they set.[128] Mason's ground seems well-taken, and his suggestion timely.

Parochial Psalmody is the subject of the third essay[129]; and Mason starts it, as he did the others, with an historical sketch. In the Reformation, psalmody displaced the old "unintelligible" chanting; and he traces the rise of its influence through the wide use of the *Old Version* by Sternhold and Hopkins.[130] After taking up Johnson's and Warton's objections to psalmody, he proceeds to lay down rules for putting a judicious selection of the Psalms into meter, to be sung at Matins and Evensong. Although he recognized the beauty and the "dignified prose Rhythm" [131] of the Prayer Book version, yet it never seems to have occurred to him that it might be set exactly as it stands; and, unfortunately, the metrical examples that he gives are not things of beauty.

Having thus covered the poetic side of psalmody, Mason turns to the more purely musical aspects, and takes up Burney's objection,[132] that the people as a whole cannot sing. He replies that, if the tune be simple, and if there be an organ or precentor, the result may prove very acceptable. Mason admits several defects in psalmody,[133] but finds that its effect in small churches and country parishes is surely much better than that of the "*scolding*

[126] *Ibid.*, III, 358.

[127] Coleridge, *Table Talk*, June 1, 1830.

[128] Burney, *History*, IV, 11-12.

[129] *Works*, III, 363 *et seq.*

[130] See Benson's index, *sub* Old Version.

[131] *Works*, III, 371.

[132] *Works*, III, 379, commenting on Burney's *History*, III, 64.

[133] One of the most just and most interesting of these is the incongruity of music, appropriate to one stanza of a poem, when sung to another stanza. Wright treats this at length. See 26 *et seq.*

Fiddles, squalling Hautboys, false-stopped Violincellos, buzzing Bassoons, all ill-tuned and worse played upon" which "the rage of Oratorios has spread to every Market Town in the Kingdom." [134] He urges that the "musical part of metrical Psalmody" be "ameliorated"; that the Psalter be reset to simple, appropriate tunes, not in the "tedious [*sic*]" Gregorian manner but in iambic or trochaic meter[135] that may "be esteemed sufficiently grave for a devotional purpose by our Protestant Bishops." [136] He prefers "the mechanical assistance of a Cylindrical or Barrel Organ[137] to the Finger of the best parochial Organist," and ends by assuring the reader that his reforms would render "this part of our Church ritual, instead of a dull and unintelligible, a pleasing and reasonable Service." [138] Mason seems to have grasped the underlying fact that congregational singing can be tolerable only with simple music, and he shows learning and common-sense in some of his suggestions; but, after all, one is inclined to agree with Burney when he remarks that Mason "is more tolerant to parochial psalmody than I have been in my life, or ever shall be." [139]

Mason's fourth essay discusses *The Causes of the Present Imperfect Alliance between Music and Poetry*.[140] Classical music, as he says, was a mere subdivision of poetry; and, as such, it followed the meter of the poem. Pope Gregory, he continues, thinking it too "light," added "a most unjustifiable length to solemn sounds," so that "sense was exiled, and sound only, predominant." [141] With the rise of musical notation in the Middle Ages, and of music as a separate art, the setting at last quite overwhelmed and obscured the text.[142] Mason wished to do away with strict measures and to return to "classical simplicity," in which "the Accent and Rhythm of the words" were "constantly attended to." [143] In the light of eighteenth-century practice, his theory that music should mirror the movement and sense of the text

[134] *Works*, III, 388.

[135] Wright points out that such a setting would be very monotonous, 34 *et seq.* For my part, I doubt the devotional propriety of singing the psalms to plain waltz or two-step time.

[136] *Works*, III, 391.

[137] Of course this is absurd. See Wright, 37.

[138] *Works*, III, 392.

[139] Dr. Burney to Mme. D'Arblay, June 9, 1795. D'Arblay, *Diary*, V, 259.

[140] *Works*, III, 395.

[141] *Ibid.*, III, 399.

[142] In his *Memoirs of Whitehead*, Mason laments the sad state of the song-writer, always at the mercy of the composer. Whitehead, *Works*, III, 89.

[143] *Works*, III, 406.

seems revolutionary. But the century had known other protests of the sort from the days of the *Spectator* down through Avison's *Essay on Musical Expression*. Mason had undoubtedly read them both; and, indeed, he claims no originality for his views.[144] The history of the nineteenth-century song and of music-drama[145] bears out the sanity of this fundamental thesis; and to-day, although music has neither abandoned bars nor returned to "classical simplicity," it does reflect the rhythm and sense of the text.

Mason's criticism of music is marked by considerable scholarship, although not of the kind that always goes back to primary sources[146]; and his practical knowledge helped him to see the shortcomings of his day. Many of his recommendations, history has not carried out: we have not abjured contrapuntal anthems; and we do not chant the Psalter in waltz-time to the accompaniment of a barrel-organ — but it is easy to ridicule reforms and proposals after the lapse of a century or more. Mason's theory of music, he has left us summed in a single sentence: "The primary use of music is to please the ear, and of vocal to convey the words it is joined to in a pleasing and intelligent strain; the secondary, yet much more essential use, is to convey sentiment, and to affect the passions." [147] No one, I think, would care to deny these two uses of the art — to please by its form and symmetry and to excite the emotions; but the stressing of one idea or the other makes a man a Classic or a Romantic critic, as the case may be. The very idea of relating music to a text is *per se* Romantic: it was brought to its perfection by the Romantic composers of the nineteenth century and to its *reductio ad absurdum* by the Neo-romantic writers of programme-music. Of course, Mason wished to "please the ear"; but he would modify the symmetry of his Handel or his Haydn "to convey sentiment and to affect the passions"; and, after all, does not this modification sum up the evolution of Beethoven from Mozart? With his objection, moreover, to strict nicety of

[144] Arne, in his incidental music to *Caractacus*, worked on these very theories. He was probably under Mason's influence. See Appendix D.

[145] See especially Mason's note on the libretti of the period, III, 408.

[146] It must be remembered that that kind of scholarship was very unusual in Mason's day.

[147] *Works*, III, 338. The view that music existed primarily for the pleasure it itself gave was a very advanced view. Most writers, under the spell of Aristotle, tried to justify it simply as a form of *imitation*.

phrase, Mason is suggesting what Wagner later accomplished, melting one *motiv* into another without melodic resolution, so that the music might freely enhance the meaning and emotion of the text. Mason's musical æsthetics, without abandoning Classical precision, are fundamentally Romantic — not quite so much so, perhaps, as Shubert and Schumann, but in the more restrained sense of Beethoven and Brahms.[148]

Mason's contemporaries took him rather seriously as a critic. Of Burney's high opinion, there is no doubt. He consulted Mason upon the manuscript of his *Present State of Music in France and Italy*[149]; and, upon publication, he was "more pleased with Mr. Mason's approbation than with anybody's since the Streathamites.' "[150] *The Monthly Review* gave a ten-page criticism to the four *Essays*.[151] It regretted that Mason had not put the material into a new "production of his muse," and then commended "many excellent reflections, among some singular opinions indeed." Among these "singular opinions," the *Monthly* evidently puts Mason's objections, in the first essay, to extempore voluntaries, to contrapuntal music, and to violin accompaniments of the organ. In the second essay, the reviewer is no more in harmony with Mason's recommendations, and does not wish to see "the venerable *services* and *full anthems* of our old ecclesiastical composers" displaced by "flimsy compositions of a modern cast"[152]; he liked Mason's "new way of stringing the harp of David" no better than Burney did, and feared it may be "too methodistical." The barrel-organ accompaniment recommended by the third essay is condemned for its "mechanical and stubborn precision."[153] The last essay, which carries no very definite suggestions, pleased the reviewer most of all; and he joined Mason in wishing for a closer relation between music and the poetry it expressed. The tone of the review is respectful and appreciative; but the writer has elucidated Mason's chief failing, an inability to suggest judicious remedies for the faults he discovered.

Not only Mason's actual accomplishment, however, is of interest; but also the taste of the man himself: it illustrates his own

[148] This comparison, of course, applies only to the fact that they, like Mason, united something of Romantic emotion with a good share of Classic symmetry of form.

[149] F. Burney, *Early Diary*, I, 109.

[150] D'Arblay, *Diary*, I, 167.

[151] *Mon. Rev.*, n. s., 1796, XX, 398 *et seq.*

[152] *Mon. Rev.*, n. s., XX, 403.

[153] *Mon. Rev.*, n. s., XX, 407.

criticism, throws some light upon Gray's musical knowledge, and shows the attitude of the intelligent musician of the day toward the great classics. For Mediæval music, Mason had no appreciation. Perhaps his objection to the Church of Rome had something to do with this; but, even so, the revival of Gregorian music did not take place until long after Mediæval literature and Gothic architecture had grown popular again. It is not surprising that he called the plain chant "mere sing-song," [154] and later referred to Gregorian music as "tedious and dull." [155] With the Renaissance, his interest awakens: he speaks of "the great Palestrina" [156]; but he preferred Pergolesi's masses.[157] He thinks Lully overrated,[158] but allows that Purcell is "sublime." [159] Of the music of Mason's own day, he seems to have enjoyed especially the vapid *opere serie* and rococo *Stabat Maters* of the Italian School.[160] On his opinion of Handel, the evidence needs careful sifting. Mason praised him as an extempore performer,[161] and in the *Essays on Church Music* speaks him fair enough.[162] The Walpole *Letters*, on the other hand, do not reflect a very high opinion: "Let Handel's music vibrate on the tough drum of royal ears; I am for none of it." [163] Probably the fact of the king's patronage enhanced Mason's aversion to Handel, as it did undoubtedly his aversion to Chambers. Perhaps this dislike was inherited from Charles Avison[164]; and Handel probably exasperated Mason particularly, by his careless and even ignorant treatment of English texts.[165] Of Handel's music *per se*, especially the works of his prime, Mason professes to have considerable admiration[166]; but he had no very

[154] *Works*, III, 363.
[155] *Ibid.*, III, 391.
[156] *Ibid.*, III, 406.
[157] *Ibid.*, III, 293.
[158] *Ibid.*, III, 289.
[159] *Ibid.*, III, 345-346.
[160] In spite of Tovey (I, 106, n.) I do not think Gray's taste was much better. See references in the letters and H. E. Krehbiel's two essays on Gray's MS. music in *Music and Manners in the Classical Period*, New York, 1898.
[161] *Works*, III, 305.
[162] *Works*, III, 308, 316, 317, 321, etc.
[163] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VII, 26, n.
[164] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., I, 236. Avison had a pamphlet war with Hayes on the matter. See *D.N.B.*, *sub* Avison.
[165] See Burney, *History*, IV, 11-12: "Handel, as a foreigner, was very likely to make mistakes in the accents of our language . . . and he has not only often made long syllables short and short long, but assigned accents and long notes to syllables and words which in reading would be rapidly pronounced," e.g., "He wás despised and rejectéd of men."
[166] Mason particularly liked his "adoption" of "Italian Opera Airs." *Works*, III, 342. Mason blames Handel's "dotages" on the need to get money. This is not true, for Handel left a very considerable fortune. See R. Rolland, *Handel*, New York, 1916, 106-107, n.

great opinion of the works composed in his blindness.[167] Whatever Mason's view actually was, one regrets to see him express a high opinion in his published work, in conformity with popular taste, and a low opinion, in his private letters. The inconsistency suggests that either his critical sincerity was not above reproach or, more likely, that his judgment — especially in his later years — was easily warped by a prejudice against royal patronage.

Mason has left his trace, though it be slight, in four divisions of music: he performed on several instruments, and probably sang; he composed choral and church music, of which one anthem remains; he helped to introduce an improved form of the piano, and invented the celestinette. As a critic, he perceived the elements of bad taste in the music of his day, but was far less successful in devising remedies. He was in no sense a great musician; but, at York, he must have proved an intelligent and critical precentor.

Even more fragmentary is our knowledge of Mason's relation to the pictorial arts; and yet numerous references show that it must have been considerable. His father taught him painting in childhood.[168] When he was hardly out of college, he advised his friend Bryant to decorate his room with Vandykes.[169] Shortly after settling at Aston in 1757, he wrote: "I lead the sweetest nothing of a life that you can imagine, and yet I paint, and I write, and I play. My paintings, I rub out, my writings I burn, and as to my playing that exists only while my fingers are upon the harpsichord." [170] When he came to town in 1760, he was "so dissipated with his duties at Sion-Hill [the seat of Lord Holdernesse], or his attention to the Beaux Arts," that Gray saw "but little of him." [171] In 1767, he was selecting a drawing-teacher for Warton's daughters[172]; and Mrs. Delany in her will, dated 22 February, 1778, gave him Sacharissa's portrait copied after the original by Vandyke "which she gave to her poet Mr. Waller." [173]

Mason sat for his portrait at least twice, once for Vaslet and

[167] 1752-1759. See Rolland, 193 *et seq.*, for a dated bibliography of Handel's works.

[168] *Works*, I, 172-173 and 212.

[169] *Gent. Mag.*, LXXI, 683, 1747.

[170] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 8.

[171] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 167-168.

[172] *Ibid.*, III, 159-160.

[173] Delany *Correspondence*, Sec. Ser., III, 487.

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once for Reynolds.[174] The Reynolds is in the possession of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge; and another portrait, perhaps the Vaslet, or perhaps a third likeness by Wilson, is described in *The Harcourt Papers* as hanging in the library corridor at Nuneham.[175] One of the portraits seems to have been painted in 1760,[176] probably the Vaslet; for the Reynolds portrait appears to be of a man of more than thirty-five,[177] and was probably done in the '70's or early '80's, when the two were very intimate.[178] Barry, moreover, introduced Mason in his *Elysium*, a "higglede-piggledyhood," including Johnson, Soame Jenyns, Burke, Mrs. Montagu, and the Duchesses of Devonshire and Rutland; but the Mason portrait was not taken from life.[179] I have in my possession three engravings, or at least prints, of Mason: one from *The European Magazine* of September, 1783[180]; one by Mackenzie, published May 1, 1807; and one, a copy of the Reynolds portrait, "engraved by R. Cooper,"[181] and prefixed to Mason's *Works* of 1811. Dobson found a print of Mason in the Blue Breakfast Room at Strawberry Hill,[182] perhaps a specimen of his own work which he presented to Walpole.

Of Mason's own artistic works, the best known by all odds are his etchings of Thomas Gray. On October 23, 1760, Gray wrote Brown that Mason "has lately etched[183] my head with his own hand"[184]; and, on June 28, 1763, Mason had just given one of the etchings to Mr. Bedingfield.[185] When Mason and Walpole began to consider a posthumous edition of Gray, Walpole wrote asking what had become of the plate of his[186] picture of Gray[187]; but Mason's reply does not answer the question. The plate seems to have been lost; and the picture that he finally prefixed to his

[174] *Brit. Mus. Cat. of Engr. Brit. Port.*, III, 203-204, lists four engravings after J. Reynolds' portrait and six after L. Vaslet's. For Vaslet, see also Davies, *York Press*, 270-271.

[175] *Harcourt Papers*, III, 8-9 and 258.

[176] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 131.

[177] This portrait has several times been reproduced. See, e.g., editions of Boswell's *Johnson*, ed. Croker, and of Walpole's *Letters*, ed. Cunn.

[178] Then Reynolds was writing the notes to Dufresnoy.

[179] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VIII, 336, n. *The Elysium* was exhibited by the Society of Arts in 1783.

[180] *Europ. Mag.*, IV, 160.

[181] Hamilton, 51, notes an engraving in mezz. by Doughty in 1779.

[182] Dobson, *At Prior Park*, 32.

[183] If Gray means "etched" in our sense, this would be a very early example in England. See F. Wedmore, *Etchings*, London [1911], 125 *et seq.*

[184] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 171.

[185] *Ibid.*, III, 11.

[186] Walpole's picture; but I gather that it is a copy of Mason's etching.

[187] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., V, 336.

edition of Gray was apparently drawn by himself in the summer of 1771,[188] and etched by Wilson, perhaps with suggestions from Vaslet.[189] Cunningham attributed a share of the work to Charles, Mason's boy[190]; and Cole says that Tyson "spoilt" it.[191] We can at least be sure that Mason had a considerable share. Cole thought it "extremely like" Gray; but Warton "was not satisfied with it."[192] The *Quarterly* found it "spirited and highly finished"[193]; but Gosse called it "hideous."[194] *De gustibus*! — I judge that it is a fair likeness, but far from flattering.[195] Of Mason's drawings one can say little with certainty.[196] He sent one to Walpole in the spring of '69[197]; and Walpole thought very highly of a sketch made to illustrate Gray's odes[198]; in 1775, Walpole declared that Mason's drawings were "dear" to him[199]; and the next year, he regretted that a pen-drawing by Mason cannot be in the "exhibition."[200] The exhibition referred to, was probably that of the Royal Society of Arts, which had just awarded Mason a silver medal "for a Drawing of a Horse."[201] In writing to Gray, he indulged in a caricature of Newcastle[202]; and, in his letters to Mrs. Delany, he introduced "many ludicrous sketches of certain persons, and caricatures as strong of the pencil as of the pen."[203] Of these sketches, serious and pleasant, I have myself seen none,[204] and know of the whereabouts of only two, both at Nuneham.[205]

In painting, Mason seems to have had some thought of serious work; but he achieved only very moderate success. He painted a figure in *chiaro oscuro* for one of Walpole's book-presses.[206] In

[188] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., V, 398.

[189] Nichols, *Lit. Anec.*, IX, 717-718; *Quart. Rev.*, IX, 313; and Walpole *Letters*, Toynbee ed., IX, 188-189.

[190] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., V, 488.

[191] Gray, *Works*, Child ed., ci. One infers from Child that it may have been a copy of a portrait at Nuneham, lxii.

[192] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., V, 419.

[193] *Quart. Rev.*, IX, 313.

[194] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 171.

[195] For a discussion of the appropriateness of printing this head, see Chapter XII.

[196] See Appendix E.

[197] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., I, 8.

[198] Walpole *Letters*, Toynbee ed., IX, 364.

[199] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., I, 173.

[200] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VI, 336.

[201] *Trans. of Soc. of Arts*, London, 1784, II, 128; and Wood, 191.

[202] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 160.

[203] D'Arblay, V, 309.

[204] Unless one accept *A Country Race Course*, reproduced by Davies in *Portfolio* No. 48, as Mason's. See Appendix E.

[205] A pen sketch in the "Bedroom in the Centre," *Harcourt Papers*, III, 277, No. 306; and the other, III, 258. No. 307, a print of Gray, may be by Mason.

[206] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VI, 285-286.

1784, he painted the Holy Family[207]; and, about the same time, he designed an "altar-piece" for the Chapel Royal, perhaps his *Good Samaritan*.[208] *The Harcourt Papers*, however, say that it was done for the Nuneham Church[209]; and, at the time of their printing, it hung in the Middle Corridor at Nuneham.[210] The estimates of Mason's painting have been numerous and conflicting. Harcourt must have admired his work, and most of Mason's early biographies have a complimentary phrase on his artistic talents; but "J. H. M." contents himself with calling him a "professed admirer" of painting.[211] The enthusiastic R. G. declared to Polwhele: "Some of his [Mason's] productions in painting rise considerably above mediocrity, and have extorted praise even from the sublime Sir Joshua"[212]; and Hunter says that the family of the Rev. Mr. Alderson, who succeeded Mason at Aston, had "some favorable specimens" of his work.[213] Miller,[214] on the other hand, affirms that he "never arrived, even to a degree of mediocrity"[215]; and Southey follows him in damning Mason as a bad painter.[216] Of Mason's technical skill, it is hard to judge. Walpole complimented him, as usual.[217] *The English Garden*[218] shows at least some knowledge of the history and theory of painting; and his other activities suggest that it must have been considerable. At all events, he was a more successful painter than Samuel Butler whose works fell to the degradation of stopping up windows.

In 1764, Mason declared that he was no antiquarian, but that he had "as gross an appetite as any of them" for anecdotes of painting[219]; but, as time went on, he became more and more enamored both of exploring the past and of experimenting with a view to the future development of the art. As early as 1760, Mason had sent Gray a seal upon which "old Fobus" — his Grace

[207] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 94.

[208] See D'Arblay, *Diary*, II, 461-462. This was probably the "altar-piece" that Mason was doing at Nuneham in the autumn of 1783, Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VIII, 410.

[209] *Harcourt Papers*, III, 201. For Whitehead on the *Good Samaritan*, see *ibid.*, XII, 358.

[210] *Ibid.*, III, 266.

[211] Brydges, *Cen. Lit.*, VII, 360.

[212] Polwhele, *Traditions and Recollections*, 221.

[213] Hunter, *Doncaster*, II, 168.

[214] It must be remembered that Miller is not above the suspicion of prejudice.

[215] Miller, *Doncaster*, 161, n. 2.

[216] Southey, *The Doctor*, IV, 271. See also Davies, *York Press*, 270 and 2 0-281; and Walpole *Letters*, Toynbee ed., *Supplement*, II, 165.

[217] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VII, 276.

[218] *Works*, I, 213, 217, *et seq.*

[219] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, I, 3.

of Newcastle — appears jocosely caricatured as an owl; and Gray had replied: "Not only the likeness but the character of the fowl is so strongly marked, that I should wish it were executed in marble, by way of bas-relief, on the pedestal of George the Second which his Grace proposes soon to erect in the Theatre." [220] In 1775, Mason was imitating antique seals, and asking Walpole for a model. Two years later, he was examining into encaustic painting as a means of copying old pictures,[221] and was studying Roman remains.[222] On another occasion, he was busy "modelling antique vases in clay." [223] Two years later at Nuneham, he was trying to unite miniature and oil painting[224]; and, in Lady Harcourt, he found "an apt and extraordinary scholar." [225] Walpole was interested and wanted to know the process[226]; and the picture that Mason sent him that autumn[227] was probably done in the new fashion. Not content with seals, painting with wax, modelling antique vases, and doing miniatures in oil, Mason even put up "a Gothic window in the chancel of his church" at Aston. In the eighteenth century, stained glass had fallen into almost complete desuetude,[228] in which it remained until about 1850. Mason may have developed an interest in this obsolete art from his Gothic predilections; but it is quite as likely that his interest arose from his acquaintance with Price,[229] whose glass was about as Gothic as a Louis Seize bonbon dish. Mason's artistic antiquarianism was not always a very serious matter, but it is significant as a sign of growing interest in the more remote arts.

Perhaps the greatest service of the dilettanti of the period was not so much their own work as their patronage. The Society of

[220] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 160. Newcastle was Chancellor of Cambridge.

[221] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VI, 428-429, n. Mason does not show much knowledge of mosaics or tapestry-weaving.

[222] The eighteenth century interested itself considerably in this subject. See, for example, *Gent. Mag.*, XXX, 113, 144, 323. There are also numerous works published on the Continent, Requeno y Vives Vincenzo's *Saggi sul ristabilimento dell' antica arte de'greci e romani pittori*, Parma, 1787, for instance. Perhaps the best recent treatment is A. P. Laurie's *Greek and Roman Methods of Painting*, Cambridge, 1910.

[223] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 36, Gray to Warton, July 10, 1764.

[224] Walpole *Letters*, Toynbee ed., XIII, 55-57.

[225] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VIII, 408.

[226] *Ibid.*, VIII, 409-410.

[227] Walpole *Letters*, Toynbee ed., XIII, 82.

[228] Maurice Drake, *A History of English Glass-Painting*, London, 1912, ch. vi.

[229] Gray knew him, and Warton thought of employing him. Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 110, 212. He is raised to that bad eminence of being the most noted glass-man of the very worst period of glass. See Drake, 99 *et seq.*, and *D.N.B.*, *sub* Price.

Arts, founded in 1754,[230] furnished an opportunity for Mason to come in contact with artists. He appears on the lists as a life member, June 5, 1760,[231] and may have belonged even earlier[232]; and he was still active in 1776, when he was awarded a silver medal.[233] This institution not only offered prizes for painting and drawing, but also gave premiums for practical inventions; and in 1760, it held "the first public exhibition in London by British artists of their own work." [234] Reynolds was a prime mover; and Gray admitted its usefulness, in first making writing paper from silk rags.[235]

Mason exercised his patronage also in a more directly personal fashion. In 1760, he had Sandby[236] do "a great picture of Mount Snowdon, the Bard, and Edward the First." [237] Mason's enthusiasm was considerable. He wrote Harcourt:

> . . . Sandby has made such a picture! such a bard! such a headlong flood! such a Snowdon! such giant oaks! such desert caves! If it is not the best picture that has been painted this century in any country I'll give up all my taste to the bench of Bishops (even to the Bp. who you know read one Ode & not t'other), and ask not even a Prebend in exchange. Put on your hat & feather! your red surtout, your Dressden cane, your ribband muff, — put them on, my Lord, & take your chaise du poste, & be pelted all the road for a French Marky, & depend upon it, you'll be amply rewarded by the sight of this picture. . . .[238]

Mason continued to employ Sandby[239]; and perhaps through his introduction, Sandby's work appeared even at Nuneham.[240] Gilpin[241] was another of Mason's *protégés*. For him, Mason obtained

[230] Wood, *Hist. Royal Soc. of Arts*, 3.

[231] *Ibid.*, 29.

[232] The Society included many of the nobility *(Ibid.*, 28 *et seq.)*; but Mason's name does not appear in Wood's "selected" list of early members.

[233] *Ibid.*, 191.

[234] *D.N.B.*, *sub* Reynolds. This gives a brief history of the institution. In 1765, it was incorporated by royal charter. See also W. Sandby, *Royal Academy of Arts*, London, 1862, ch. iii, for the relation of this Society to the Royal Academy and other societies of the day.

[235] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 139. The Society gave Romney his fame in 1762. See E. Chesneau, *English School of Painting*, London, 1891, 42.

[236] Sandby was "the father of the English Water Color School." See numerous references indexed in J. L. Roget's *Old Water Color Society*, London, 1891; C. Monkhouse, *Early English Water Color Painters*, London, 1890, ch. i; and Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 168-169.

[237] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., II, 171.

[238] *Harcourt Papers*, VII, 15. This description fits an engraving after Loutherbourg, used as a frontispiece in E. D. Synder, *Celtic Revival.*

[239] Gray *Letters*, Tovey ed., III, 1 *et seq.*

[240] *Harcourt Papers*, III, 257.

[241] See *D.N.B.* Probably Gilpin senior.

Reynolds' criticism of the *Three Essays on Taste*; and, in 1780, Mason asked Walpole to accept the dedication of the third edition of his *Essay on Prints*. Walpole had once seen and "admired" some of Gilpin's drawings[242]; shortly after, Walpole was arranging for Sandby to teach Gilpin aquatinting[243]; and, in 1782, Mason wrote that Gilpin wished to present Walpole with one of his pictures.[244] Benjamin Wilson, moreover, was a friend of Mason's; and Mason seems to have instructed him in etching.[245] He taught the art also to his own "boy Charles," a specimen of whose work he sent to Walpole.[246] Walpole thought it good[247]; and, somewhat later, Mason sent his "painting servant" to London "to perfect himself in drawing at the Academy." [248]

Mason, moreover, was a critic, as well as an artist and a patron. One of the chief monuments that remain of Mason's interest in painting, is his translation into English heroic couplets of Dufresnoy's Latin poem *De Arte Graphica*.[249] He had begun it "in very early youth with a double view of implanting in his memory the principles of a favorite art, and of acquiring a habit of versification." [250] From time to time, he worked upon it; but Gray advised him against publication. In 1779, he was "revising and correcting" it.[251] Over a year later, Walpole read the manuscript and praised it.[252] Reynolds was laboring on his extensive annotations in December of '81.[253] Early in '82, the work was finished, and Hannah More was looking forward to its publication.[254]

What significance it has is largely connected with Dufresnoy, and with Sir Joshua Reynolds; Vitry's[255] Latin dissertation has a

[242] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VII, 432, n.

[243] *Ibid.*, VII, 509.

[244] Mitford notes that Mason had several of them at Aston. Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VIII, 311, n.

[245] Nichols, *Lit. Anec.*, IX, 717-718. Benjamin Wilson must not be confused with his contemporary, Richard Wilson, the great but unrecognized landscape-painter.

[246] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, I, 89. The boy's name was Charles Carter.

[247] *Ibid.*, I, 91.

[248] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VII, 44. Cf. Forbes, 242.

[249] Composed at Rome, 1633-53; published in 1668. See W. G. Howard, *Publ. Mod. Lang. Assoc.*, XXIV, 71.

[250] *Works*, III, 9.

[251] Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, Mitford ed., II, 43.

[252] *Ibid.*, II, 161.

[253] *Ibid.*, II, 213.

[254] Hannah More, *Memoirs*, I, 145.

[255] Paul Vitry's diss., Univ. Paris. *De C. A. Dufresnoy Pictoris poemate quod "De Arte Graphica" inscribitur*, Paris, 1901. See more recently L. Gillet, *La Peinture, XVII et XVIII Siècles*, Paris, 1913, 314 *et seq.*

substantial chapter on Dufresnoy's life; followed by one on the 1668 edition of *De Arte Graphica*; another analyzing its "classicam doctrinam" as to invention, drawing, and color; and a final chapter on its more immediate influences in France and the Low Countries. The book ends with a complete reprint of the poem and valuable bibliographies, which show that *De Arte Graphica* must have been a classic for over a hundred years, not only in France but in Italy, Germany, and England also. Dryden had translated it into prose about 1695[256]; and, in spite of his many editions, Defoe did it again in 1720[257]; J. Wright, again in 1728[258]; and James Wills Englished it once more in 1765 with a biography by Dr. Thomas Birch.[259] When Mason's translation came out in 1781, there was little more to add — except the notes of Sir Joshua Reynolds.[260]

American scholarship has taken up various aspects of the matter in the last fifteen years. Howard[261] has treated at length the Italian and French predecessors and possible sources of Dufresnoy, and finds him indebted "for the substance of his poem," to Horace; for his rules, "to Alberto, Leonardo, and their successors"; and for his general attitude to Poussin.[262] Howard's analysis shows that although Dufresnoy's attitude was a step forward from Vida's blind "Imitation" of the Ancients to Boileau's reasoning "imitation," [263] yet he is "dogmatic" [264] and puts judgment in control even of inspiration[265]: Dufresnoy seems to have been a rather

[256] "First Printed in Quarto, 1695." See Scott-Saintsbury ed. of Dryden, XVII, 281.

[257] I am indebted for this reference to the kindness of Professor W. P. Trent, who has a copy of this very rare book in his library. Defoe seems to have taken it, in part, from the Latin; in part, from the French of de Piles.

[258] I have not seen this. Vitry lists the book, 109. I suppose it to be in verse. Wills' work is a line for line blank verse translation. The *Monthly*, May, 1754, declared it "stiff" and not very clear. Apparently, a certain Walter Churchey, attorney at law, also made a translation. See Cowper, *Letters*, Wright ed., III, 124.

[259] This was in very sorry blank verse which Mason scornfully describes as "meter without rhyme" (*Works*, III, 10).

[260] The *Chronological List of Painters* which takes up pp. 225-283 was added to Dryden's translation by Richard Graham. See Mason, *Works*, III, 227; and title-page of the 1750 ed. of Dryden's translation. Mason's *Works* reprint also Dryden's *Preface*, Pope's *Epistle* to *Jervas*, Dufresnoy's *Sentiments*, and a *Table of Rules*.

[261] *P.L.M.A.*, XXIV, 40 *et seq.* *Ut Pictura Poesis*, by W. G. Howard.

[262] *P.L.M.A.*, XXIV, 72. Howard seems to have gone quite beyond Vitry in tracing the sources of the poem.

[263] *Ibid.*, 78.

[264] *Ibid.*, 72.

[265] *Ibid.*, 81.

thorough-going Neo-classicist.[266] Thompson[267] has taken up Reynolds' æsthetic attitude, and finds a sort of rational Neo-classicism[268] — but little advanced over Boileau. Reynolds "did not wish to create in his pupils a disrespect for authority; his aim was to show how, over and above rule, there is a fixed reason for all sound theory."[269] Thompson finds a possible influence of Shaftesbury[270]; but, on the whole, Reynolds is "not Romantic." Of the notes to Dufresnoy, Thompson has little to say; but his general summary of Reynolds' ideas seems fairly applicable to the Dufresnoy notes as well as to the *Discourses*.

The form of Mason's translation is governed partly by the original; and the content, entirely. There is, therefore, little to say of Mason's work beyond a few words on the appropriateness of his method and the exactness of his translation. His general approval of Dufresnoy may be taken for granted; but it is unsafe to assume that he gave certain and unqualified assent to every statement. It is, however, safe to say that in this art he seems to have been less Romantic than in some others.[271] His own notes are purely in the nature of textual criticism; his *Epistle to Sir Joshua Reynolds* has little of æsthetic theory; but his *Preface* announces a Neo-classical belief in "the study of Nature and the chaste models of antiquity," and praises Dufresnoy for recommending "simplicity of style."[272] Even in a translation, he cannot abstain from contemporary politics; and, at the end of the poem, he adds some twenty lines[273] of comment on the American War and of solid Whig advice to George III.[274]

[266] Vitry found him ". . . minus stricte et dogmatico more expressa quam ulterius in academicorum scriptes vel sermonibus, bunianior scilicet et tolerabilior"; and Rocheblane (*Le Goût en France*, Paris, 1914, 90) finds that although he talks much about Nature he leaves no place for it in his scheme.

[267] Elbert N. S. Thompson, *Discourses of Sir Joshua Reynolds in P.M.L.A.*, XXXII, 339 *et seq.*

[268] Reynolds' ideal seems to be a combination of Nature and Experience. Mason, *Works*, III, 114.

[269] *P.M.L.A.*, XXXII, 344. Thompson does not seem very well grounded in the early Italian and French writers on æsthetics, writers whom he shows Reynolds knew and many of whose teachings had come down to him through the alembic of Dr. Johnson's mind. See 340, 343. Thus Thompson seems to underestimate Reynolds.

[270] *Ibid.*, 346.

[271] Mason's *Preface*, *Works*, III, 7, makes this quite clear.

[272] *Works*, III, 7.

[273] *Works*, III, 75; these were written in 1781. See Mason's note, 147.

[274] The objection to Gothic ornament "of base and barbarous forms," must have cost Mason inward qualms, when he remembered the castellated barn of *The English Garden*. *Works*, III, 45.

As *The Art of Painting* belongs to the Horatian type of didactic poetry, Mason put it into heroic couplets.[275] Allowing for the difficulties of rhyme, his translation is fairly compact and fairly literal, but he has a way of Popifying Dufresnoy. For instance, he follows his original in ascribing the beginning of art to Egypt and its prime to Greece; but he adds a personification of art as a goddess, and translates:

> Quos inter, Graphidos Gymnasia prima fuêre
> Portus Athenarum, Sicyon, Rhodos atque Corinthus . . .

into the Popean:

> 'Twas there the goddess fix'd her blest abodes,
> There reign'd in Corinth, Athens, Sicyon, Rhodes.[276]

The change consists in "adorning" the original with the inevitable adjective (viz., *blest* abodes) and poetizing it with the inevitable trite personification or faded metaphor[277] of English Neo-classicism. At any rate, this stiff garb did less injustice to the original than did Pope's famous parody of Homer. This Neo-classicizing of the material often increases the length of Mason's poem; and thus we find the line,

> Nil Pictore malo securius atque Poetâ.[278]

turned into the characteristic couplet,

> Of all vain fools with coxcomb talents curst,
> Bad Painters and bad Poets are the worst.[279]

His "woods" and "wide-extending floods" must, however, have done much to atone for it. *Ibid.*, 53. One of the most interesting things in the poem is Dufresnoy's objection to ungracious subjects,

> Each theme fantastic, filthy, vile or vain,
> That gives the soul disgust or senses pain.

Dufresnoy, of course, would have taken the classical side on the Laocoön question made famous by Lessing. From Mason's objection to the mock horrifics of Chinese gardening, I suspect that he was Neo-classicist enough to agree with Dufresnoy.

[275] *Works*, I, 205. In this note, he explains that he considers *The English Garden* of the less technical Virgilian cast.

[276] *Works*, III, 31.

[277] One wonders just how much influence the Latin lexicons and text-books of the day had on Neo-classical vocabulary. Englishmen aimed to imitate Horace and Virgil. In these two poets, they sought the decorous metaphor, simile, and adjectives; but their knowledge of the Latin poets was implanted at Eton and Oxford with a given set of Latin editions and vocabularies; and it was through this medium that they imitated their models. See *The Theory of Translation in England in the Eighteenth Century* by the present author in *Neophilologus*, (Groningen, Holland) September, 1921.

[278] *Works*, III, 27.

[279] *Ibid.*

Mason seems to pride himself on the accuracy of his translation.[280] In fact, his notes are confined largely to this matter. He has compared Dryden's and Wills' English translations, and de Piles' French version, and he evidently uses them with some discrimination.[281] Sometimes he suggests sources[282]; and sometimes points out a *locus desperatus* in the text.[283] He notes any omission, variation, or addition.[284] His work, however, is by no means quite literal: he translates "Asperiora," "rough," [285] and "non poterunt" into "permit not," [286] thereby changing both diction and syntax; but the greater compactness of Latin and the strictures of his couplet-form made such freedom necessary. Like so much of his work, this poem has admirable craftsmanship to recommend it — but little else.

The eighteenth century, however, had an inordinate love of good craftsmanship. Scott wrote Beattie: "I am told Mason is about a translation of Fresnoy's 'Poem on Painting.' The original, as far as I can judge, reads flat and dry. Dryden's prose version does not mend it. What charms Mason's poetical powers may bestow upon it, I do not pretend to determine. There is more in expression than we are often aware of." [287] The poem was well received. Walpole professed an excellent opinion of it; Whitehead wrote that he had "heard no opinions on Fresnoy yet but favorable ones"[288]; Sir Joshua seems to have been proud of the work, and wished to send a copy to Bishop Percy.[289] Even Johnson wrote Reynolds that he found Mason "better than exact; he has his author's distinctness and clearness without his dryness and sterility." [290] The reviews were long and appreciative. The *Gentleman's* printed an extract.[291] The *Critical* was quite submissive to Sir Joshua's notes, and declared the text equal to Mason's usual "excellence if not superiority in the poetical department."[292] *The Annual Register* gave a three-page review[293]; and the *Monthly*

[280] In this, he is like most eighteenth-century translators, even the most inaccurate.
[281] E.g., *Works*, III, 80.
[282] E.g., *ibid.*, III, 82.
[283] E.g., *ibid.*, III, 82-83, 90. Evidently Mason's notes were written after Reynolds', III, 98.
[284] *Ibid.*, III, 98, 145, 147.
[285] *Ibid.*, III, 51.
[286] *Ibid.*, III, 51.
[287] Forbes, *Life of Beattie*, 351.
[288] Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VII, 510.
[289] Nichols, *Illust.*, VIII, 205.
[290] Johnson, *Letters*, ed. Hill, II, 286.
[291] *Gent. Mag.*, LIII, (Part I), 159.
[292] *Crit. Rev.*, LV, 270-278.
[293] *Ann. Reg.*, 1783, 181-183.

complimented the annotator, and praised Mason's work as better than Dufresnoy's: "If from any unforeseen event, the poetical works of Mr. Mason were to be lost, this translation alone would entitle him to one of the foremost ranks on Parnassus." [294] Two years later, the *Gentleman's* had occasion to review the poem again and declared it "not only as pleasing as such a didactic poem can be, but by the notes and illustrations of such a master as Sir Joshua, the English has all the grace of an original, and will descend with lustre to future ages." [295] Tytler ranked him as a translator with Dryden, Pope, Addison, and Rowe[296]; and, as late as 1811, Drake declared that Mason's version could "boast of excelling the original." [297]

One other critical work of Mason's remains to be discussed: *Anecdotes of Sir Joshua Reynolds, chiefly relative to his Manner of Coloring*. Mitford found the manuscript at Aston in 1851, and printed it. It was incomplete, and the missing part was sought in vain. This work makes Mason one of the chief sources on both Sir Joshua's life and his technique; and the notes on his unfortunate experiments in color are very valuable.[298] Mason himself explains how he came to write the anecdotes: he had the *entrée* to the studio[299] even when Sir Joshua's "man Ralph had orders to repel visitors by saying that his master had then a sitter." Mason continues: "My observations therefore, though they will be those of an amateur, yet of one who has made many experiments in the practical part of painting in oils." The book shows what colors Sir Joshua mixed and in what order he put them on for several specific portraits; and, in this way, it is possible to judge in a positive fashion the lasting qualities of various com-

[294] *Month. Rev.*, LXVIII, 476.

[295] *Gent. Mag.*, LV, 125.

[296] Tytler, *Principles of Translation*, 374.

[297] Drake, *The Gleaner*, London, 1811, 37.

[298] Reynolds' pictures have always been notorious for fading. Witness the St. Cecilia in the Tilden Library, New York, and Armstrong, 142 *et seq.* Painters have told me that his use of vegetable pigments is the cause; and, indeed, the faded gown of St. Cecilia seems to have been a sort of carmine pink. Mason does not seem to have recognized the difference between vegetable and mineral paints; for he says (*Eng. Gard.*, Bk. III, ll. 323-328) that "time pales vivid hues": time does not pale the vermillion of sulphide of mercury, or "canary yellow" which are as "vivid" hues as one can find; but vegetable colors often fade; and these were apparently the colors to which Mason was accustomed. Purely mineral colors, moreover, sometimes react chemically and so change their shade.

[299] Probably these observations were composed in 1754 when Reynolds was painting Holdernesse. See Pulling.

binations. The fact that Mason's observations are taken seriously by present-day critics,[300] suggests that he was perhaps rather more than the "amateur" he modestly professed himself to be.

Mason, during his entire lifetime, was deeply interested in the pictorial arts: he etched, he drew, and he painted; he was antiquarian and experimenter, and played at making seals, vases, miniatures, and stained glass windows; he was active in the Society of Arts; he patronized Sandby and Wilson, helped Gilpin, and sent his servant to the Academy. He translated Dufresnoy, and wrote valuable *Anecdotes* on the life and technique of Sir Joshua Reynolds. In this, as in the other arts, his interest was so scattered, that it seems impossible to trace any definite influence; but it is worth while to ask the question whether Mason, in his relation to the pictorial arts, was in any sense Romantic. The paucity of his work makes a reply difficult. Undoubtedly, Book I of *The English Garden* shows considerable interest in landscape painting; he displayed the spirit of inquiry and experiment in trying to unite oil and miniature; and the Gothic window at Aston shows a taste for the arts and crafts of the Middle Ages[301]: all these things belong to the Romantic point of view. His *Holy Family* and his *Good Samaritan,* on the other hand, do not suggest the age of Shelley and Byron; and his association with Reynolds allies him to the spirit and the age of Johnson.[302] In painting, as in music, Mason had Romantic inclinations; but I have found no evidence that his point of view in the pictorial arts was as advanced as his essays show him to have been in music. In both arts he illustrates the transition, only in a somewhat earlier stage, that was likewise evident in his poetry, his dramas, his gardening, and his æsthetic theory.

[300] Armstrong quotes him, 42, 47-48, 142-144; see also Pulling, *et al.*

[301] If the scenes from country life be in fact Mason's, there is more evidence on the side of Romanticism. See Appendix E.

[302] It must, however, be noted that Mason was interested in the most Romantic side of Sir Joshua—his color experiments. The Classical painter takes not *color* but *form* as the basic element in his art. Color is essentially Romantic.

CHAPTER XIV

CONCLUSIONS

THE present study has set forth in some detail the life and works of Mason in relation to the manners and to the intellectual movements of his time. The age is a difficult one; for the lives of very few of Mason's contemporaries have been written in a fashion at once accurate and interpretative, and by no means all of the literary currents have been adequately charted. The result has been a deep-rooted misunderstanding of the period; and Mason has been one of those to suffer most severely. Out of more than a score of biographical sketches, including that by Sir Leslie Stephen, hardly one is trustworthy in mere matters of fact; and none of them gives his life in any great detail or places it in the setting of his social and cultural surroundings.

The present work has endeavored to correct the biographical inaccuracies that have regularly passed current; it has brought forward a considerable number of new facts; and, from the compilation with facts already pointed out, it has tried to read, behind his biography, the character and motives of the man himself. Such a study is of particular interest; for Mason's life is in many ways typical of his age. He was the son of an affluent clergyman and himself a typical pluralist. He had the usual Cambridge career as undergraduate and as fellow. His friendships and correspondence connect him with most of the notable personalities of the age, and his interests illustrate every aspect of that eighteenth-century dilettantism which was spreading culture down through the middle class and preparing them for the social and political prominence that they achieved in the following century.

The criticism of Mason's works, moreover, has always been fragmentary; and the judgments have been various and even erratic. In general, those who have confined themselves to one aspect of his achievements have estimated him more liberally than those who have dismissed them all with an epigram. The present

study aims to interpret Mason's works according to the literary criteria both of modern scholarship and of eighteenth-century taste. The results show that Mason was almost as highly thought of in his own day, as he is ill considered in ours. His pristine popularity suggests that he must have stood for things that were very important to the age; and his loss of popularity suggests that these things had something ephemeral about them, and were elements of eighteenth-century culture that a later period has outgrown. Mason's works, like his life, are typical of his age in those respects that were peculiar to it. He was typical, moreover, not only in literature, but, to the degree of his powers, in painting, music, gardening, and indeed in most of the matters that attracted the cultivated man of his generation. His age, furthermore, is particularly interesting as the crucial period in the struggle between Neo-classical and Sentimental theories of art and of life. Mason strangely commingles these two elements; and the distinguishing of them in his biography, in his thought, and in his creative work, illuminates the cultural background of the generation preceding Coleridge and Wordsworth, and illustrates the tendencies of English Romanticism before the advent of German influence.

The events of Mason's life show rather little evidence of the instability and eccentricity usually found in persons of the Romantic temperament. In the intimate relationships of family and friends, he was perhaps capricious; but his many and long-continued friendships, and his loyalty to his father and step-mother, even after being cut off almost penniless, show him possessed of a mind balanced and sane, and tempered with Christian charity. His biography does not picture him a mere "beautiful soul" living from moment to moment of sweet sensation or alluring reverie. There is something very candid and matter-of-fact about many of his letters; and, indeed, his life was full of the routine of the country "squarson." When, in a moment of relaxation, he engages in fantasy, his letters suggest the whimsicalities of a Pope rather than the Romantic dreams of a Coleridge, or the sentimental lucubrations of a Richardson or a Sterne. Far from setting out upon the path of "original genius," Mason was governed by the two types of imitation that characterized the latter Renaissance: imitation of the Christian ideal, and imitation of the urbane gentleman accord-

ing to the Classical conception. His caprice may have led him at times into breaches of decorum, as when he rated my Lord Harcourt on the folding of a letter, or unreasonably slighted Mrs. Siddons in company; but, in the essential acts of his life, Mason appears as belonging essentially to English *Verklärung* rather than to the *Geniezeit.*

In his works, the condition is very different. His minor poems reflect the melancholy and his plays the melodrama that characterized the Romanticism of the 1750's and '60's; his satires and his Dufresnoy, on the other hand, reflect the Classicism of the 1770's and '80's. He followed different tendencies without realizing their essential difference; and thus Romantic elements appear in his Neo-classical works and *vice versa.* His literary content, for instance, is sometimes Neo-classical, giving voice to a narrow patriotism, essentially insular, essentially bourgeois, and essentially Whig; but sometimes, it expresses Sentimentalism of the "benevolent" sort, largely derived from Shaftesbury, and from Rousseau in his more amiable moments. The form also of his works is a composite of elements: his Pindaric odes and pseudo-Sophoclean tragedies are cast in a Hellenic mould; his didactic poetry and his Popean satires are essentially Neo-classical; but his sonnets and Spenserians are Romantic; and so are the Elizabethan *Argentile and Curan* and the incoherent story of Alcander and Nerina in the last book of *The English Garden.* The details of his technique show a strange blending of contrary schools. His couplets are not sufficiently end-stopped and antithetical to have the sharpness and barb of Pope; his blank verse is too end-stopped and regular to attain to the recurrent undulations of Milton; his common alliterations point at once to the "smoothness" recommended by the Augustans, and the melodic richness of *Kubla Khan* and *Ulalume*; and his prosopopœia and periphrasis are damningly Neo-classical; but his use of the archaic, of the exotic, and of natural English landscape, is Romantic. One short poem may show a dozen combinations and re-combinations of elements from conflicting æsthetic schools; and the usual result is disunity of effect.

His prose works show a mixture no less interesting. He formed his *Memoirs of Gray* upon a Romantic belief in the importance of individual personality; and he made Gray tell his own life, as

Pamela does, in a series of private letters. This scheme was in complete opposition to the Neo-classical sense of fitness that required a man to appear before the public in discreet and respectable attire, if not with a certain pomp and circumstance. Mason, therefore, modified his Romantic method in actual execution: Gray's letters were published; but only after a very strenuous revision at the hands of the biographer. Mason's prose, moreover, both here and in his sermons and essays, is largely the empty shell of Neo-classical rhetoric. It is usually colorless, and sometimes pedantic with Latinisms and superfluous flourishes. The letters, however, especially those to Harcourt, show the whimsical side of his character at its best. The prose has little of the sentimentality of *Werther* or of the exotic preciousness of a St. Pierre; but it has a good deal of the exclamatory touch-and-go of Shaftesbury's *Characteristics*. Mason may have let the reins of inward control run slack, but he always held them firmly in his hand.

The late eighteenth century was, for literature, a period of transition from the Neo-classical to the Romantic, a transition that reached its consummation in Wordsworth and Coleridge. In landscape-gardening, it was the heyday of Romanticism, or perhaps even the beginning of decline; for gardening, moulding as it does the very stuff of external nature, is most susceptible to Naturalistic influences; it began its Romantic career about 1700, and within fifty years was thoroughly Romanticized by Kent and Brown. In dealing with this art, Mason was abreast of his time; and, although he did not accept the decadent extremes advocated by Chambers, he cut himself quite loose from the nice symmetry and proportion of the old formal garden, and urged an "English" style that would titillate the emotions with a pleasing rusticity: the ground-plan was to be a confusion of curves; luxuriant foliage was much in request; and sham grottoes and imitation torrents were included among the "natural" beauties.

The architecture of the age like the poetry, was not yet dominantly Romantic. In fact, it began to show signs of the new movement only after Kent and Brown had completed the revolution in gardening.[1] During the first half of the century, the

[1] The gardening and the architecture of the Neo-classical period had been closely associated. One wonders whether it was not the rise of Romantic "Eng-

"amateurs" had erected Græco-Georgian country houses in strict accord with the rules and proportions of Palladio. Walpole, in his Strawberry Hill, had still clung to this Neo-classical principle of imitation, merely turning from the Roman to what Gothic models he could find; and the influence of his *papier-maché* ornaments is visible in the Gothicized farm buildings of Mason's *English Garden*. The "amateurs" had found classical architecture a fine plaything, and the generation which followed took up Gothic in the same spirit, without any sense of departure from "Augustan" ideals; but their imitation was largely spoilt by their lack of vital sympathy with the original. Mason, for instance, knew enough to realize "the absurdity of annexing [to his buildings] parts unknown to antiquity"; but he utterly failed to comprehend the religious aspiration of the Gothic abbey or the social significance and power of the feudal keep: he used the former for a barn and the latter for an ice-house. In short, although most of Mason's building in *The English Garden* is Gothic in outward form, he had no real conception of the Middle Ages, and used them only as the most superficial Romanticists have done, as a piquant auxiliary to his Arcadian felicities.

The music of Mason's day was even less Romantic: Rousseau had given French opera a new bent; and, somewhat later, Gluck prepared the way for Wagnerian music-drama; but the continued popularity of Italian *opera seria* and the strong influence of Handel at court and among the professional musicians, kept England from showing any very marked traces of Romanticism, even in the later eighteenth century. Music still depended for its charm on symmetry of pattern rather than on passionate appeal; and, as yet, setting and text were seldom associated in the synchronous delineation of a given emotion. Mason's essays, although they contain numerous absurdities, were Romantic in both these respects: all music is to "convey sentiment and affect the passions"; and vocal music is "to convey the words it is joined to in a pleasing and intelligent strain." Here is a clear statement from the age of Mozart, looking forward to the symphonies of Beethoven, the songs of Schubert, and the Romantic operas of Weber.

lish" gardening that largely brought about the revival of Gothic (which was also supposed to be "English") as a type of architecture that would suit the form and ideals of the new gardening.

The pictorial arts also were rather slow to become Romantic. The latter part of the century was, to be sure, the period of the Romantic Wilson, but Wilson was unrecognized; and even Gainsborough sought in vain to make a living by his landscapes. Reynolds dominated the period; and Reynolds held to a Neo-classicism but slightly modified by his own judgment. Mason, although he saw painting largely through the eyes of Reynolds, nevertheless had touches of Romanticism: in Reynolds himself he looked for color rather than form; he was interested in Sandby and the beginnings of the aquarelle; and his interest in Gothic induced him to order a stained-glass window for the Church at Aston.

In his own philosophy, Mason was no less eclectic. *The English Garden* combines something of the Christian ideal of humility and religion with the Classic conception of urbanity and poise, and these two, with Romantic "sensibility" and a "beautiful soul." As a result, he implies in one breath the inconsistency that man is essentially evil and must humble himself to be exalted, and that man is essentially good and has only to cast aside restraints to blossom forth in his natural perfection. Mason's *obiter dicta* form a labyrinth of bewilderment. He never tried to think out a really coherent system; and his life, therefore, was largely governed by a mere opportunism: one feels that he seldom made a real choice, but acted merely according to instinct and habit — and then justified the act, if need were, by any philosophical system that lay at hand. Habit kept his life regular; but an instinctive love of emotional excitement sentimentalized his works; and this fundamental inconsistency, which might alarm a real thinker, did not trouble Mason.

In this fashion, Mason illustrates his generation, illustrates it by exemplifying its peculiar stage in the dissolution of Neo-classical, and in the rise of Romantic, culture; and particularly illustrates it in the contrast of his life, predominantly Neo-classical, with his works, predominantly Romantic. It is ironical to think of the travelled Mr. Mason "with a thousand important airs and graces, so much *virtù*, so much *sçavoir-vivre!* . . . the rich clergyman, warm, snug and contented as a bishop," [2] and to realize the same man revelling in the strained lachrymosity of *Elfrida* and in the

[2] Gray uses the words to describe Robinson, but they fit Mason rather well.

buckram heroics of the Alcander narrative: yet just this contrast was characteristic of the comfortable, bourgeois public who wept over Sterne and Mackenzie, and took delight in sentimental comedy and grave-yard elegies. Literature and the arts were a convenient escape from the difficulty of real thought; and, moreover, vital forces required an outlet. The hunting squire had his hounds and his brandy; the exquisite dilettante, his *Elfrida* and his *Otranto*. The art of the period did not mirror the reaction of the artist to life, but rather his reaction from it. Gardening had become an emotional debauch; and literature, music, and painting were turning to the same object. This tendency to order one's actions with Neo-classical regularity, and one's emotions with Romantic unrestraint, resulted, for the average man, in a chaotic compromise excellently exemplified in the clashing philosophies of *The English Garden*. If ethics be the study of the relations between theoretic Right and practical Action, then the tendency toward intellectual confusion and the divorce from one another of thought, emotion, and action, hopelessly nullified it as a guide for the life of the individual. The forces of inner restraint were weakening; and the latter eighteenth century was psychologically ready for an eruption of elemental passions and for political and social revolution.

Mason was entirely unconscious of the movements presaged and reflected in his life and works. He thought and did what everybody else was thinking and doing. To his own generation, his life was useful, and his works filled a timely need; but he lacked poise and understanding too much to achieve any lasting accomplishment — lacked them, not only because he divided his energy among so many activities artistic and otherwise, but also because he, like the vast majority of men of all ages, had no really deep reaction to life and no inward, philosophical unity. At no period did he hold to any one single point of view; and so he could neither comprehend any one attitude of life fully nor progress from one to another. Without any real assimilation, he merely took a photographic impress of everything about him; and the things about him were, for the most part, the agreeable, but rather superficial conveniences of eighteenth-century life. It is indeed ironical that this very Boswellian quality of wax-like im-

pressionability gave value to his best work, the *Memoirs of Gray*, and to-day, gives him his historical importance as an expression of the age. Mason was a charming acquaintance, a loyal friend, a loving husband, a dutiful parish priest, a diligent and conscientious man of letters; but, of himself, he was a rather small person in the history of English culture, and notable chiefly for the movements and ideals he unconsciously expressed. He illustrates early Romanticism as a natural evolution from the Age of Pope, and as a period of germination for a later age which was to put, not only thought, but life itself upon a new Sentimental foundation.

APPENDICES, BIBLIOGRAPHIES, AND INDEX

APPENDIX A

THE following list of "dates of the principal events relative to myself" was found by Mitford among Mason's MSS. and printed at the end of the Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, II, 411. For the convenience of the reader, I transcribe it here with annotations.

1. Born Feb. 12, old style, 1724.
2. My mother died in childbed, the Christmas following.
3. Admitted pensioner to St. John's College, Cambridge, under Mr. Migley,[1] June 30, 1743[2]; elected scholar to that College the October following.
4. Nominated by the Fellows of Pembroke to a Fellowship in that society (a dispute having occurred between them and the Master concerning the right of election), when Middle Bachelor, 1747.
5. This dispute being compromised, was admitted a Fellow by the Master, in Feb., 1749.
6. Admitted to the degree of Master of Arts, July, 1749. Went into orders. Was instituted to the living of Aston, and appointed Chaplain to the Earl of Holdernesse, Nov., 1754.
7. My father died, Aug. 26, 1753.
8. Archbishop Hutton gave me the Prebend of Holme, in the Cathedral of York, Dec., 1756.
9. Appointed by the Duke of Devonshire Chaplain in ordinary to the King, July 2, 1757.
10. Resigned a bye Fellowship of Pembroke (which was given me by that society, after the foundation Fellowship became vacant), on institution at Aston, 1759.[3]
11. Appointed Chaplain to his present Majesty, Sept. 19, 1761.
12. Dr. Fountayne, Dean of York, made me Canon Residentiary of that Cathedral, Jan. 7, 1762.
13. Installed Precentor of the same church on the resignation of Dr. Newton, Bishop of Bristol, and on that account, in His Majesty's gift, Feb. 22, 1763.[4]

[1] Mr. Wrigley, Mitford's error doubtless.

[2] The Cambridge records say July 1, 1742. The error of the year may be Mitford's.

[3] Mason was not instituted at Aston in 1759; it does appear, however, that he resigned his Pembroke fellowship in that year. Perhaps the end of the parenthesis should be placed after "Aston."

[4] Error for Feb. 11, 1762. Mason, by mistake, seems to have changed the correct date, which he thought was O. S. into New. See Tovey, II, 247-248, and LeNeve, III, 157.

14. Resigned the same day to Archbishop Drummond, the Prebend of Holme, on having the Prebend of Driffield annexed to the Primateship.

15. Married the daughter of Wm. Sherman, Esq., of Hull, Sept. 25, 1765.

16. She died in a consumption at Bristol, March 27, 1767. "Ah! amantissima, optima fœmina, vale!"

17. John Hutton, Esq., Marshe,[5] near Richmond, Yorkshire, died June 12, 1768, by which death an estate in the East Riding came to me in reversion.

18. Mr. Gray died July 30, 1771, and left me his Executor jointly, with Dr. Brown, Master of Pembroke Hall.

19. Resigned the Chaplaincy to the King, August, 1773.[6]

[5] Marske, Mitford's mistranscription doubtless.

[6] 1772: Probably another example of Mitford's carelessness.

APPENDIX B

THE CHIEF EVENTS OF MASON'S LIFE AS ESTABLISHED IN THE PRESENT WORK

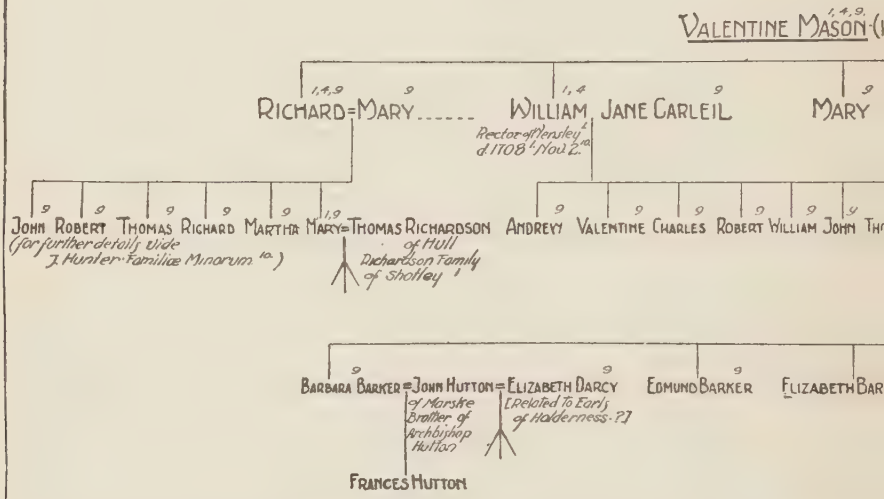
NOTE: A comparison is made with the chronology as established in *D.N.B.* *D.N.B.* may be right in dating *Memoirs of Gray* and other of Mason's works a year in advance of the title-page date; for it has always been the practice of English booksellers to date ahead their fall books.

1725 Feb. 23. (N.S.) Born at Hull, 16. (*D.N.B.*, 12 Feb. 1724 O.S.)
1725 Dec. Mother died, 18.
1742 July 1. (O.S.) Admitted pensioner at St. Johns, 20. (*D.N.B.*, June 30, 1743. Cf. Appendix A.)
1745/6 Commenced B.A., 33. (*D.N.B.*, 1745.)
c. 1746 Became acquainted with Hurd and later Warburton, 30.
1747 Became acquainted with Gray, 30.
1747 Published *Musæus*, 29. (*D.N.B.*, same.)
1747 Elected Fellow of Pembroke, 33. (*D.N.B.*, same.)
1748 Published *Il Pacifico* in *Grat. Acad.*, 29.
1749 Feb. Came into his fellowship, 33. (*D.N.B.*, same.)
1749 July. *Installation Ode*, published and performed, 29. (*D.N.B.*, same.)
1749 Commenced M.A., 33. (*D.N.B.*, same.)
1749 Published *Isis*, 29. (*D.N.B.*, same.)
1751 Became acquainted with Walpole, 30.
1752 Published first edition of *Elfrida*, 41. (*D.N.B.*, same; see Bibl. A.)
1753 Aug. 26. Father's death, and consequent loss of income, 42-44. (*D.N.B.*, same.)
1753 c. Sept. John Hutton of Marske made his will in Mason's favor, 44.
1754 Nov. 17. Ordained Deacon, 45.
1754 Nov. 24. Ordained Priest, 45.
1754 Nov. 27. Instituted Rector at Aston, 45. (*D.N.B.*, 1754.)
1754 Appointed chaplain to Lord Holdernesse, 46. (*D.N.B.*, same.)
1755 June. Chaplain to Lord Hertford's embassy to Hanover, 48. (*D.N.B.*, same.)
1755 Met Lord Harcourt (first time?), 48.
1756 Published *Odes*, 51. (*D.N.B.*, same.)
1756 Helps Brown to Mastership of Pembroke, 50.

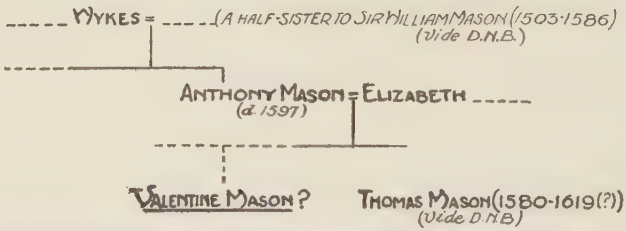
1756 Dec. 6. Archbishop Hutton gave Mason the Prebend of Holme, 49. (*D.N.B.*, same.)
1757 Is commissioned to offer laureateship to Gray, 50.
1757 July 2. Appointed Chaplain in ordinary to George II, 49. (*D.N.B.*, same.)
1759 Published *Caractacus*, 55. (*D.N.B.*, same.)
1759 Resigned the Pembroke fellowship, 54. (*D.N.B.*, 1754.)
1760 Colman and Lloyd satirize the odes of Mason and Gray, 51.
1760 Walked in the coronation procession of George III, 59.
1760-1771 Improvements and rebuilding at Aston, 75.
1761 Wrote *The Surprise*, 61.
1761 Sept. 19. Appointed chaplain to George III, 59. (*D.N.B.*, same.)
1762 Jan. 7. Appointed Canon Residentiary of York, 59. (*D.N.B.*, same.)
1762 Feb. 11. Appointed Precentor of York and Prebend of Driffield, 60. (*D.N.B.*, Feb. 22.)
1762 Feb. 11. Resigned Prebend of Holme, 49.
1762 Dec. 7. Published *Elegies*, 61. (*D.N.B.*, in text, 1762, in bibl. 1763, the date on the title-page.)
1764 Published *Poems* (first collected ed.), 63. (*D.N.B.*, same.)
1765 Privately printed *Œdipus* by Whitehead and himself, 62.
1765 Sept. 25. Married Mary Sherman at Hull, 68. (*D.N.B.*, Sept. 25, 1764.)
c. 1766 Wrote *Argentile and Curan*, 62.
1767 Mar. 27. Mason's wife died, 70. (*D.N.B.*, same.)
1767 Published *A Supplement to Dr. Watts' Psalms and Hymns*, 63.
1767 July 15. Mason's aunt (probably Mary Robinson) died, leaving him a small legacy, 74-75.
1768 Jan. 12. John Hutton died, leaving Mason a considerable inheritance, 76. (*D.N.B.*, June 12.)
1771 Feb. Helped Brown to the living of Streatham, 79.
1771 July 30. Gray died; Mason and Brown were his executors, 78. (*D.N.B.*, same.)
1772 c. Aug. Resigned Chaplaincy to George III, 83. (*D.N.B.*, 1773.)
1772 Published *Animadversions on York Lunatic Asylum*, 80. (*D.N.B.*, same.)
1772 Nov. 21. *Elfrida* first performed (without Mason's consent), 81. (*D.N.B.*, same.)
1772 Published Book I, *The English Garden*, 80. (*D.N.B.*, same.)
1773 Published *The Heroic Epistle*, 84. (*D.N.B.*, same.)
1774 Published *The Heroic Postscript*, 86. (*D.N.B.*, same.)
1775 Lord Holdernesse sold his Aston estate to Verelst and others, 90-91.
1775 Published *Memoirs of Gray*, 88-89. (*D.N.B.*, 1774.)

1775 Finished translating Rousseau's *Pigmalion*, 88.
1776 *Ode to Mr. Pinchbeck*, 86. (*D.N.B.*, same.)
1776 Dec. 6. *Caractacus* performed, 89.
1777 Published *Epistle to Dr. Shebbeare*, 87. (*D.N.B.*, same.)
1777 Published *The English Garden*, Book II, 80. (*D.N.B.*, same.)
1777 Instituted rector of Langton-upon-Swale, 84, n.
1777-8 Sued Murray for piracy from Gray's *Works*, 90. (*D.N.B.*, 1777.)
? 1778 Wrote *Sappho*, 88. (*D.N.B.*, 1778.)
1778 May 18. Lost Chaplaincy to Holdernesse by the latter's death, 91.
1778 Stonehewer, Mason, and Brown erected a monument to Gray in Westminster, 79.
1779 Feb. 23. *Elfrida* performed "with alterations by the author," 82. (*D.N.B.*, Feb. 22.)
1779 Published *Ode to the Naval Officers of Great Britain*, 107. (*D.N.B.*, same.)
1779 Published *The English Garden*, Book III, 80. (*D.N.B.*, same.)
1779 The first meeting of the York Association, 94.
1781 Published *The English Garden*, Book IV, 80. (*D.N.B.*, 1782.)
1782 Published the *Archæological Epistle to Dean Milles*, 87.
1782 Published *Ode to William Pitt*, 107. (*D.N.B.*, same.)
1782 Published *The Dean and the 'Squire*, 87. (*D.N.B.*, same.)
1783 Published Dufresnoy's *Art of Painting*, 92. See also Bibl. A. (*D.N.B.*, 1782.)
1783 *The English Garden* published complete with notes by Burgh, 80.
1785 Jan. Withdrew from the York Association, 98-99.
1785 Finally broke with Walpole, 103-104.
1788 Published *Memoirs of Whitehead*, 102. See also Bibl. A. (*D.N.B.*, same.)
c. 1788 Turned somewhat conservative, 99.
1794 March. Wrote the *Palinodia* against Democracy, 116.
1796 March. Reconciled with Walpole, 118. (*D.N.B.*, same.)
1797 April 7. Died at Aston, 118-119. (*D.N.B.*, same.)

APPENDIX C. DESCENDANTS



PART II. A POSSIBLE GENEALOGY of VALENTINE MASON - (1583-1639).



NOTES AND QUERIES has twice, and FOSTER'S YORKSHIRE PEDIGREES, once (III Vide genealogical tables of MASONS of HULL, HUTTONS, etc.) have put the query whether the poet, through his great-great-grandfather VALENTINE, was related to THOMAS MASON (1580-1619 D.N.B sub nomine) or to Sir JOHN MASON (see D.N.B.) D. HACK TUKE (N&Q. 8 VI, 148) writes that MASON believed himself descended from "SIR THOMAS [JOHN] MASON" ---- "The poet had this statement from his grandfather" In the verbal transmission of this remote genealogical fact - if it be a fact - SIR JOHN and THOMAS were confused. In this case, seemingly, the poet meant SIR JOHN, if the rest of TUKE's note be accurate. The entire relationship is possible but dubious

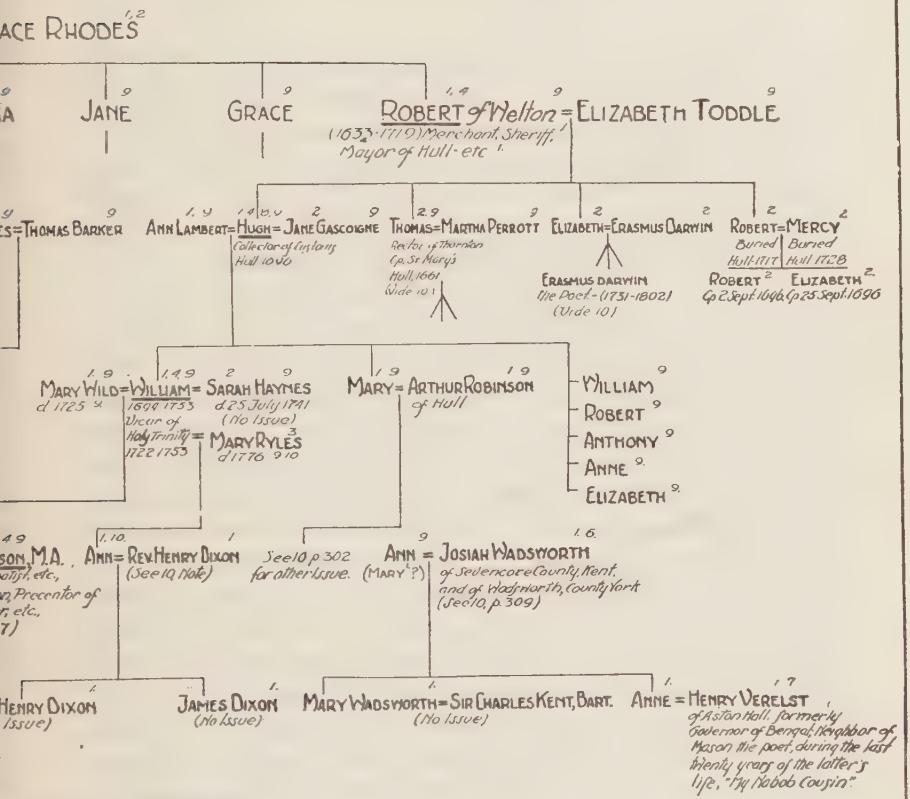
Cf HUNTER FAMILIAE, ETC.

[1] N&Q. 4 Series, VIII, 33 and 8 Series, VI, 148.

MA
Daughter
William Sherman
keeper to the G
at Hull. Marrie
St. Mary Lowga
25 Sept. 1765
(1739-1767)

LENTNE MASON

PART I



AND QUERIES, 4 Series, XII, 87
OF ABRAHAM DE LA PRYME, 218, n.
234 g.
HUNTER, DONCASTER II, 167 n An untrustworthy source vide reediting 10
AND QUERIES, 4 Series, XII, 87, is wrong. vide Appendix A and N & Q 6 Series VII, 388
GRAY LETTERS, TOVEY Ed. III, 137
N-WALPOLE LETTERS, MITFORD Ed. I, 214; I, 164, etc
T; ADMISSIONS II, 203.
STER'S YORKSHIRE PEDIGREES, III, vide MASONS of HULL, HUTTON, etc.
NTER, FAMILIÆ MINORUM GENTIUM, London, 1894, et seq. This genealogy of
MASON family is a great improvement on HUNTER'S earlier work in DONCASTER
ER says his material came from one of the family.

C de Zafra 3 28 '24.

APPENDIX D

THOMAS ARNE'S INCIDENTAL MUSIC TO "CARACTACUS"

WHEN Colman brought *Elfrida* on the stage in 1772, without Mason's consent, Dr. Arne supplied the incidental music, an overture, and a setting for the choruses. Mason did not attend the production, but expressed a poor opinion of "that old fumbler Dr. Arne."[1] By the winter of 1776, his wrath seems to have been sufficiently cooled for him to work with Arne[2] over the production of *Caractacus*.[3]

This is the last of Arne's compositions, and was published with a preface in 1776; but, although both music and preface are highly prophetic of the trend of nineteenth-century music, their significance has not been pointed out until rather recently; and Mason's share of credit in the matter seems to have escaped observation. Hawkins did not see fit to mention Arne at all in his voluminous *History;* Burney does not discuss the *Caractacus*[4]; and Cumings omits it in his *Notice*.[5] Davies, more recently, gave some recognition to the work, and said that Arne "had some literary pretensions, and the dedication of his *Caractacus* (1776)[6] is interesting reading." Davies continues: "In this opera, he used clarinets and the serpent; the harp is much employed throughout, and a march is scored for three trombones and harp only." Squire points out that Arne was a century ahead of his day in his careful imitation of sense by sound, that the overture is "a singular attempt at program music," and that his annotations to the setting are quite as meticulous as those of Berlioz.[7]

[1] Mason-Walpole *Letters,* I, 45.

[2] How much they actually worked together is a difficult matter of inference. Harris presumably engaged Arne; and Mason had to accept the situation.

[3] Sonneck mentions another anonymous setting "certainly *not*" by Arne. I have not seen it, nor does he mention where a copy can be found, *Lib. of Cong., Opera Librettos printed before 1800, sub Caractacus.*

[4] Burney points out that Arne began by imitating Handel's operas in the Italian style, IV, 368, that he fell to writing ballads, IV, 485-486, and that finally he returned to Italian music in *Artaserse,* IV, 613.

[5] W. H. Cumings, *Dr. Arne, a Bicentenary Notice* in *Internationale Musicgesellshaft,* XI, 529.

[6] It may, in fact, have been 1775. See *D.N.B.* and Grove, *sub* Arne.

[7] *D.N.B., sub* Arne.

The 1776 edition seems to be rare[8]; but an article in *The Musical Times* covers the essential points, and quotes sufficiently from Arne to show the nature of the work:

> The design of this Music is to represent, by corresponding sounds and rhythms, the Ideas expressed, and those alluded to, in the Drama, principally in its lyric parts; the former is attempted to be done by the *vocal*, the latter by the *instrumental* Music. Overture, not formal, represents (1) "Spirits of Snowdon lamenting the approaching fall of Mona," and second the "Souls of the departed Druids personified by the harp, interceding to avert the impending danger." [9]

The use of the harp is particularly significant as an early attempt at local color in music; and the wedding of text and setting was a conspicuous feature that was apparently not lost upon the critics. *The New Morning Post or General Advertiser*[10] congratulated the town "on the acquisition of so fine an entertainment as *Caractacus*, where poetry and music unite their fascinating powers," but feared that the "present age" would not appreciate it.

Arne's previous work showed no programmatic qualities. The music to *Elfrida*, which was written without Mason's approbation, neither bears any close relation to the text nor shows any attempt at local color, although the subject itself gives quite as great opportunities, and although Mason, in one of the appended *Letters*, required that the music be "intimately connected" with the words.[11] This was one of the chief *dicta* of Mason's musical creed; and, in his *Essays on Church Music*,[12] he devoted much space to it. The difference between this and Arne's previous work is particularly marked by two letters published with his score: one of them, from Mason to Harris, the manager at Covent Garden, treats of the union between poetry and music; and the other, from Arne to Mason, avows Arne's endeavor "to restore Music to its ancient and long neglected office of handmaid to Poetry." This is Mason's very theory; and Arne either borrowed it directly from him or at least seems to have acted upon it out of deference to the author of the play.

[8] There is a copy in the Library of Congress. See Sonneck.

[9] J. S. Shedlock in *The Musical Times*, London, Feb. 1, 1899, XL, 89.

[10] Shedlock gives the reference Dec. 7, 1776.

[11] *Works*, II, 187.

[12] *Works*, III, 287. See especially 408; see also Chapter XIII, Mason's Relations to Music and the Pictorial Arts.

Thus Mason was the probable cause of Arne's historic setting of *Caractacus*. It is the last of Arne's works; and whether or not he would have chosen to follow the theories again, is a matter of conjecture. I have not been able to find that the piece had any influence of its own[13]; and, indeed, it would be very difficult to separate followers of Mason and Arne from followers of Rousseau and Gluck. It is not without interest, however, that Mason's theories were the occasion of what is probably the first English music that attempts to reflect the local color of its text.

[13] Elgar's cantata *Caractacus* set to Acworth's text, seems in no wise to have been influenced by Mason.

APPENDIX E

"W. MASON," ANIMAL PAINTER

IN his *English Society of the Eighteenth Century in Contemporary Art*,[1] Davies reproduces *A Country Race Course* "From an engraving after W. Mason." [2] In the text, he dates it as very late eighteenth-century work, and explains that it is "one of a pair of engravings that are not very widely known; and another by the same hand, the subject of which is a coach being driven through the high street of a country town, is quite as rare. All three of these are of a quality and spirit that excite some surprise at Mason's name not being better known; and, if the sporting fraternity were not so easily pleased with the reproductions of ridiculous coaching and racing prints of the early nineteenth century that now fetch such high prices, it is possible that his work might have a little more of the recognition it undoubtedly deserves." Graves lists three pieces exhibited in the Royal Academy by "William Mason, Painter (An Honorary Exhibitor): 1782, 489, Pursuit of a highwayman. 1783, 392, Scene in a country town at the time of a race. 1786, 588, A review."[3] Very likely the "Scene in the country town at the time of a race" is the same as the "Country Race Course" reproduced by Davies. But is this the Mason who is the subject of this present volume?

Redgrave's *Dictionary*[4] lists a "William Mason, *animal painter*," and gives the following entry: "He practised in the latter half of the 18th century. J. Jenkins and R. Pollard engraved horse-races after him; and Val. Green produced in 1783 a fine mezzotint of his *Scene at a Country Fair at Race Time*." This Mason is undoubtedly the same as the one mentioned in Graves and Davies; but the question of his identity with William Mason, 1725-1797, is very uncertain.

The chapter on Mason as a musician and painter shows that he was painting a *Holy Family* and a *Good Samaritan* in the early

[1] Davies, *op. cit.*, 72-73.

[2] In the text he inserts the full Christian name "William."

[3] Graves, *Royal Academy*, 211. See also, Graves, *Dictionary*, 156.

[4] Redgrave, *op. cit.*, 276.

'80's, and that he received a prize in 1776 from the Royal Society of Arts "for a drawing of a Horse." If the Royal Society gave him a prize for such a subject,[5] it is entirely possible that, a few years later, he should exhibit at the Academy a picture of horse-racing.[6] His friend Sir Joshua could easily have procured him *entrée*. The absence of any other William Mason in the *Dictionary of National Biography* and in such lists of artists of the period as I have looked over, confirms the presumption; and the fact that Redgrave can give no life, is in itself significant. On the other hand, equally significant is the fact that, in Mason's letters, we hear nothing of these pictures listed by Redgrave and Davies.

[5] Probably his friendship for Gilpin, the animal painter, interested him in the subject. See *D.N.B.* and Walpole *Letters*, Cunn. ed., VII, 82, n.

[6] For professional reasons, Mason may not have been desirous of calling too much attention to his exhibition.

BIBLIOGRAPHY A

WORKS BY MASON

THIS bibliography is intended to include works by Mason and collections of Mason letters, etc., together with miscellanies, anthologies, and other works, containing poems, letters, or notes by Mason. The most probable attributions to Mason are also quoted. Of the editions of the Gray and Walpole letters, only the most important are listed. For a more complete bibliography of Gray letters, see C. S. Northup, *A Bibliography of Thomas Gray*, New Haven, 1917, index. Great care must be taken to separate the works of William Mason the poet, 1725-1797, from William Mason the writer of religious works, 1719-1791. Of works by the latter, the best collection I have found is in the Boston Public Library. Reprints in the reviews have not been listed: for the most important references and for brief *regesta*, see the appropriate chapters of the present work. Not every separate entry in this bibliography represents, in the exact sense, a new "edition." To a number of the items, I have not had access; and it is safe to suppose that some of them do not represent actual reprinting from fresh type, but a mere reissuing from type that had been previously used. I have, moreover, noted publication in various collections, such as Dodsley's: although inclusion in such a collection hardly constitutes an edition, yet it has significance.

AIKIN, DR. [JOHN]: Select works of the British Poets, London, 1821.
IX, 188 *et seq.* Ode to Memory, Ode to Independency, Elegy on Lady Coventry, Epitaph on Mrs. Mason.
Another edition, London, 1826.
Another edition, Philadelphia, 1831.

ANECDOTES of Sir Joshua Reynolds, chiefly relative to his manner of coloring, London, 1859.

ANIMADVERSIONS on the present government of the York Lunatic Asylum, in which the case of Parish Paupers is distinctly considered in a series of propositions, York, [1772].

ANNUAL REGISTER, THE, or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature of the Year, London, 1758—
Contains, together with several notices of Mason: 1790, 88, Mason's Account

of a New Method of Making Yeast, in two letters; 1790, 145-146, an Ode to James Bruce Esq., a very dubious attribution; 1804, 917 *et seq.*, Elegy, quoted from Bingley's *Tour*. Dodsley commonly quotes excerpts from the currently published works of Mason. *See* Index, 1819.

ANTHEMS, *see* Liturgies.

ARCHÆOLOGICAL EPISTLE, AN, to the Reverend and Worshipful Jeremiah Milles, D.D., Dean of Exeter, President of the Society of Antiquaries, . . . London, . . . 1782.

This poem was brought to the printer by John Baynes, a Yorkshire Whig who knew Mason in connection with the Association. Stephen, *D.N.B.*, *sub* Mason, Bibl., note 1, follows J. Nichols, *Lit. Anecd.*, VIII, 113 *et seq.*, in denying Mason's authorship and crediting the poem to Baynes. Even Almon, the printer, was deceived at the time; but Sir Leslie Stephen could easily have ascertained the fact by referring to the Walpole-Mason *Correspondence*, published by Mitford in 1851. *See* Walpole *Letters*, Toynbee ed., XII, 217, 227, 241, 246, 328.

ART OF PAINTING, THE, *see* Dufresnoy.

ASYLUM FOR FUGITIVE PIECES in Prose and Verse, An, London, 1785. [ed. J. Almon.]

I, 192. Probationary Ode "by Mr. Mason" [a satire on Mason].
III, 196. Ode in Commemoration of the Glorious Revolution, 1688.
III, 253. On Mr. Mason's Abuse of Dr. Samuel Johnson.

AVISON, CHARLES: An Essay on Musical Expression, [3d ed.], London, 1775.

On 75, there is a note which Mason claims to have supplied. *See* Mason's *Works*, III, 396. The *ed. princ.* of Avison's *Essay* was 1752.

BELL'S Classical Arrangement of Fugitive Poetry, London, 1789-94.

V, 86. Epistle to Sir W. Chambers, Author of a late Dissertation on Oriental Gardening.
92. An Heroic Postscript to the Public occasioned by their favorable reception of the late Heroic Epistle.
VIII, 20. To a Young Nobleman leaving the University.
24. Written in the Garden of a Friend.
29. To the Rev. Mr. Hurd.
IX, 95. On the Death of Maria Gunning.
121. Musæus.
XI, 137. Il Bellicoso.
144. Il Pacifico.
XIII, 143. On Melancholy.
XV, 68. Addressed to an Æolus's Harp.
94. Ode Performed at the Senate-House at Cambridge. [*See* notes at the end of each volume.]

BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE, Edinburgh, 1817—

BOOK OF THE POETS, London, 1848.

407. Elegy on Lady Coventry.

BRITISH POETS, Chiswick, 1822. [ed. S. W. Singer. *See* LXXVII.]

CABINET OF POETRY, THE, London, 1808.

Musæus, six Odes and four Elegies.

CAMPBELL, THOMAS, *see* Specimens.

CARACTACUS, a dramatic poem: written on the model of the ancient Greek tragedy . . . By the author of Elfrida, London, 1759. Second edition, London, 1759.

Third edition, London, 1760.
Not in the *Brit. Mus. Cat.*
Third edition [?], Dublin, 1764.
Another edition in Bell's *British Theatre*, vol. XXXI, 1797, containing a short life.
Another edition in *Select Plays*, vol. VI, Baltimore, 1804.
Another edition in *Modern British Drama*, vol. II, London, 1811.
Another edition. No date or place of publication. [Pirated?]
Caractacus, a dramatic poem . . . altered for theatrical representation, London, 1777.
Although the author of the present work did not have access to a copy of this edition, the author's copy from which this edition was printed seems to be at the New York Public Library. Davies, *York Press*, 279, lists it as printed at York, and sold in York and London.
The Lyrical Part of the Drama Caractacus, 1776.
Caractacus, tragédie en cinq actes, sur le modèle des tragédies grecques, 1785.
Perhaps 1784. *See Cat. de Soleinne*, No. 4910. A prose translation in the *Traduction de Théâtre Anglois*, by the Baroness de Vasse.
Καράκτακος ἐπὶ Μώνῃ sive Cl. Masoni Caractacus Græco carmine redditus, cum versione Latina a G. H. Glasse, Oxford, 1781.
Carrattaco, poema drammatico scritto sul modelo della tragedia Greca antica . . . recato in verso Italiano da T. J. Mathias. Napoli, 1823.
See Specimens.

Chalmers, Alexander, *see* Works.

Cheap Repository for Religious and Moral Tracts, Bath, n. d.
A series of chap-books, ed. Hannah More. Mason is supposed to have contributed "half a dozen ballads," Meakin, 316-317.

Collection, A, of the Most Esteemed Pieces of Poetry that have appeared for several years, with Variety of Originals, by the Late Moses Mendez, Esq., and other Contributors to Dodsley's Collection, to which this is intended as a Supplement. London . . . 1767.
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294. Isis, an Elegy.

Collection, A, of the Most Esteemed Pieces of Poetry, that have appeared for several years, with Variety of Originals, By the late Moses Mendez, Esq., and other Contributors to Dodsley's Collection . . . A Second Edition, London, 1770.
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III, 303. Musæus: A Monody to the Memory of Mr. Pope.
IV, 269. An Ode performed in the Senate House at Cambridge, July 1, 1749, at the Installation of his Grace Thomas Holles Duke of Newcastle, Chancellor of the University.
IV, 274. Ode to an Æolus's Harp.

[Two more vols. were added in 1758.]
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VI, 312. To Mr. Mason. [By William Whitehead.]
VI, 315. Ode to Independency.
VI, 318. Ode to Melancholy.

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VI, 318. Ode on Melancholy.

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III, 345. Musæus, a Monody to the Memory of Mr. Pope.
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IV, 296. Ode to an Æolus's Harp.
VI, 70. The Lyric Muse to Mr. Mason. [By Whitehead.]
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VI, 381. Ode on Melancholy.

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VI, 58. The Lyric Muse to Mr. Mason. On the Recovery of the Right Hon. the Earl of Holdernesse. [By Whitehead.]
VI, 312. To Mr. Mason. [By Whitehead.]
VI, 315. Ode to Independency.
VI, 318. Ode on Melancholy.

Collection of Poems, A, in six volumes by several hands, with notes, London: Printed for J. Dodsley, in Pall-Mall, 1782.
III, 309. To a Water Nymph.
III, 315. Musæus: A Monody to the Memory of Mr. Pope.
IV, 282. Ode at the Installation of the Duke of Newcastle.
IV, 287. Ode to an Æolus's Harp.
VI, 71. The Lyric Muse to Mr. Mason. [By Whitehead.]
VI, 341. To Mr. Mason. [By Whitehead.]
VI, 344. Ode to Independency.
VI, 348. Ode on Melancholy.
In Dodsley's "Postscript," VI, 376, he says he has tried to select the best of

all the verse that has come out during the preceding forty or fifty years. The *Brit. Mus. Cat.* lists other collections by Dodsley. These probably contain Mason material; but they have not been available to me.

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I, 220. Il Pacifico.
I, 226. On the Death of his Wife.
I, 227. Epitaph on Miss Drummond.
I, 228. Elegy to a Young Nobleman.
I, 231. Isis.

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Cunningham, *see* Walpole.

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Third edition, London, 1782.

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Contains Elfrida and Caractacus.

Dufresnoy, C. A.: The Art of Painting . . . Translated into English verse by W. Mason 1783.
See Gent. Mag., LIII, 159, and Davies, *York Press*, 292-294.
Another edition, 1809.

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Elegant Extracts, or Useful and Entertaining Poetry selected for the Improvement of the Young, London. [n.d., ed. V. Knox?]
22. Elegy on Lady Coventry.
23. Elegy to a Young Nobleman.
237. Isis.
286. Excerpt from Mason's translation of Dufresnoy's *De Arte Graphica.*
[193. Ode to Truth attributed to Mason, probably erroneously.]

Elegant Extracts, London, 1809. [ed. V. Knox.]
65. Elegy on Lady Coventry.
66. Elegy to a Young Nobleman.
497. Isis.

Elegant Extracts, Chiswick, 1823, [Part VIII].
205. Musæus.

Elegant Extracts, London, 1824, ed. R. A. Davenport.
351. Isis.

Elegies, London, 1763.
Second edition, London, 1763.

Elfrida, a dramatic poem written on the model of the antient Greek tragedy. With introductory letters, London, 1752.

Mason, *Works*, II, 1, says *Elfrida* was first published in 1751. According to *Gent. Mag.*, XXII, 136 and 147, it was published actually in March, 1751/2. This would make Mason's statement correct according to O. S., which was not officially abandoned in England until September, 1752. *See* J. J. Bond, *Handy Book of Dates*, London, 1889. See also Nichols, *Anecd. of Boyer*, 230.

Second edition, London, 1752.

Third edition, London, 1752.

Fourth edition, London, 1753.

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Fifth edition, corrected, London, 1757.

Another edition, London, 1759.

Called on the title-page a third edition.

Seventh edition, London, 1773.

Eighth edition, London, 1773.

Another edition in British Library, 1796.

Elfrida by Mason in Modern British Drama, London, 1811, II.

Another edition in Bell's British Theatre, 1797, XXXIV, No. 3.

Chorus of the dramatic poem of Elfrida as performed, etc. 1772.

Elfrida, Poema, drammatico . . . tradote in versi italiana dall' abate A. Pilori, Firenze, 1774.

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ENGLISH ANTHOLOGY, London, 1794. [ed. Ritson.]

III, 262. Isis, an Elegy.

ENGLISH GARDEN, THE, a poem, Book first, London, 1772, Printed at York.

See R. Davies, *York Press*, 288.

Second edition, Book first, Dublin, 1772.

Second edition, London, 1772.

The English Garden: a poem in four books. York and London, 1771-81.

The first ed. may have come out in 1771 and been post-dated. This is a binding together of the four books that came out severally, dated 1772, 1777, 1779, 1781.

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See R. Davies, *York Press*, 298.

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Le Jardin Anglois poëme en quatre chants, traduit de l'Anglois (par M . . .), orné de cinq planches, Paris, 1788.

English Poets [ed. A. Chalmers], *see* The Works of the English Poets, etc.

Epistle from the Rev. William M — n to the Right Hon. William Pitt . . . petitioning for the vacant laureatship, London, 1785.
Certainly not by Mason. Cushing attributes it to R. Polwhele.

Epistle to Dr. Shebbeare, An, To which is added An Ode To Sir Fletcher Norton in imitation of Horace, Ode VIII, Book IV. By Malcolm Macgreggor, of Knightsbridge, Esq. Author of the Heroic Epistle to Sir Wm. Chambers, London, Printed for J. Almon, 1777.
Another edition in *The School for Satire*, London, 1801.

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European Magazine, The, London, 1782-1890.

Garrick, David, Private Correspondence, London, 1831-32.
I, 99, 299. Letters by Mason to Warburton.

Gentleman's Magazine, London, 1731—
This contains many poems by Mason, reprinted as they appeared. XLI, 183, April 1771, Il Bellicoso. *ed. princ.* Cowper says that the *Gentleman's* was "in general singularly correct." (*Letters*, ed. 1904, II, 448.) It was, moreover, widely read by the literati (*Ibid.*, III, 267).

Gilpin, William: Three Essays, London, 1808. [3d edition.]
Contains an extract from a letter of Mason's, xiii.

Gratulatio Academiæ Cantabrigiensis . . . post pacem . . . restitutam . . . [Cambridge,] 1748.
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Gray, Thomas: *Elegy* tr. into German prose by W. Mason. London, 1843.
Brit. Mus. Cat. is probably wrong in attributing this translation to William Mason 1725-1797.

Gray, Thomas: The Poems of Mr. Gray to which are prefixed Memoirs of his Life and Writings by W. Mason, M.A. York . . . 1775.
See R. Davies, *York Press*, 269-271.
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Gray, Thomas: The Letters chronologically arranged from the Walpole and Mason Collection, Vol. I, London, 1819.

Gray, Thomas: The Correspondence of, and William Mason. Edited by the Rev. John Mitford. London, 1853.
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